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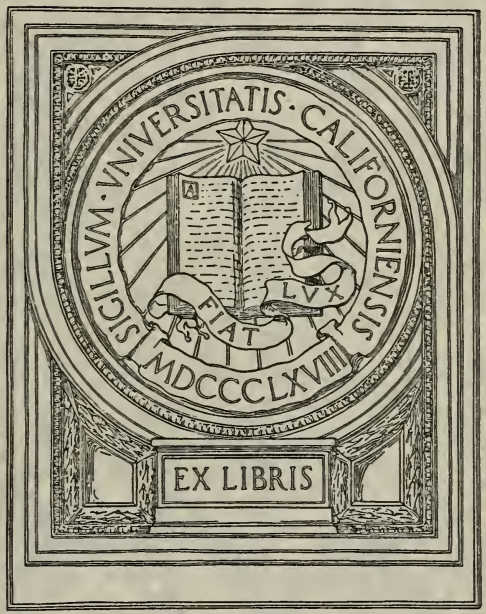
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MATILDA;

A TALE OF THE DAY.

" Blush I not?
Can you not read my fault writ in my cheek?
Is not my crime there?——"

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1825.

PRINTED BY J. BRETTELL, RUPERT STREET, HAYMARKET.

PREFACE.

If the Readers of the following pages expect "a novel," in the circulating library sense of the word, they will probably be disappointed; and indeed the writer is by no means sure that they will not be disappointed, whatever it may be that they expect to find. But if the incidents of his tale should be deemed trite, and the cha-

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racters common, it will the more readily be conceded, that *he may* have heard of such things — that he *may* have seen such people.

Perhaps it is the reverse of propitiatory to own, that these pages have been penned more with a view to divert their writer than any one else. Not that he professes himself indifferent either to the amusement or edification of any one who may choose to become his reader ; but he is unaffectedly diffident as to his powers of communicating either. Indeed, so strange does he feel in his new character of Author, that if any, the most easily pleased of his friends, should unconsciously be indebted to him for having

"beguiled the tediousness and process of their travel," on leaving London, or helped them to wade through a long wet evening on first arriving in the country, such will be the utmost success he presumes to contemplate.

MATILDA.

CHAPTER I.

It was early in the month of July, when that most valuable department of the daily press, which is headed "Fashionable Arrangements," contained, among many other pieces of information, which, however intrinsically important, would not be so interesting to my readers, the two following paragraphs:—

"Lord Ormsby (late the Honourable Augustus Arlingford,) is arrived at Mivart's Hotel, after an absence of two years on the Continent."

"Lord and Lady Eatington will this day entertain a distinguished party at their splendid mansion in Grosvenor Square."

That intelligence of this description should have attracted every eye, is not to be wondered at, when it is recollected, that, as the advance of the season had diminished the number of these events, the type in which they were announced had proportionably increased in size and importance; and many an absent fair one, who had been prematurely hurried from chalked floors to green fields, had now no other resource than to make that a distant study which was no longer a present pleasure. But be this as it may, a little before eight, on the day above mentioned, the first carriage was heard to come clattering up South Audley-street, containing Lord George Darford and Henry Penryn; two youths, most comprehensively described as "Young men about town."—"Very unlucky, my father wanting the carriage afterwards," said Lord George.—"I do so hate to be early. The half-hour introduction to a dinner, like the preface to a book, should always be skipped."

"One might know one was too early, the fellow drives so fast," said Mr. Penryn, as they swung round the last corner, at the risk of annihilating a pensive nursery-maid, and all her "pretty ones, at one fell swoop."

" I wonder who we shall have at the Eatingtons'?" continued he; " they have been too much in the Pidcock line this year."

" Yes," said Lord George, " and that's another bore in being early; for your human lion is not like his royal brother—the liveliest before he's fed."

Stopping at the door at this moment, the length of time that elapsed before the thundering announcement of their arrival produced its (usually instantaneous) effect, seemed to confirm their apprehensions as to the flagrant punctuality of their arrival; and the tardy appearance of one liveried lackey alone, in red waistcoat and white apron, verified their worst fears. Many a felon has ascended the fatal ladder with less appearance of shame and contrition, than was painted in the countenances of these unhappy " young men about town," as they ascended the carpeted stairs,—about to expiate the offence of such unnatural prematurity of arrival; and the deserts of Arabia would hardly have appeared more awful in their eyes, than did the solitude of the drawing-room, where they found themselves—literally first. Silence succeeded the shutting of the door, which was at length broken

by Lord George; whilst, by the help of the pier glass, with his right-hand, he arranged his flattened locks; and, with his left, quelled the first symptoms of insurrection in his neck-cloth.

"At least, we shall hear the lions all announced —we shall know who the inmates of the menagerie are to be to-day." Hardly had this consolation been suggested, when the door was opened, not by the regular officer, the groom of the chambers, who scorned to be a party to so untimely an arrival, but by a mumbling footman, who muttered something that was meant to be a name, and disappeared; having ushered in a young man, dressed in deep mourning. Our two friends regarded him with an unacknowledging stare, which the stranger repaid in kind, as he passed to a sofa at the further extremity of the room, and unconcernedly occupied himself with a newspaper; whilst the two youths remained in the window-place, where they had nestled themselves from a sense of solitude.

In any other civilized country in the world, gentlemen thus accidentally meeting, if they did not, like the lady in the Anti-Jacobin, "vow an eternal friendship," would at least, from the circumstance of meeting in the house of a common

friend, have been admitted to the local rank of acquaintances, and received the regular brevet allowances of nods, smiles, &c. But here we are more afraid of being involved in a bow than in a bad bet—of being obliged to acknowledge an acquaintance than a bill—and the most persevering dun is not so embarrassing as the face which, one is obliged to own, has acquired a legal title to a nod, from our having been incautious enough to incur acquaintanceship with the owner.

There was something in the air and manner of the stranger, which it was impossible for the most unobservant not to remark as peculiarly distinguished; and from the tact which the usage of the world gives to every one in these matters, such would certainly have been the opinion of our two worthies, if their judgment had not been wilfully biassed by the conclusion which they logically deduced from having been every where, and knowing every body,—that "him whom they did not know they ought not to know;" and they would as soon have adopted the doctrine of the Preadamites, as have admitted, that any one, worthy to be ranked among the elect, *had* existed prior to the commencement of their fashionable millennium, just two years before. There-

fore, expecting from the character of the Eatingtons that the party would be rather a mixed one, Mr. Penryn whispered to Lord George,—" I think it's the new actor: to be sure this man's figure looks better; but then I only saw him in Richard the Third, with hump, and all that sort of thing." " No," said Lord George, " I think it's the composer—what's his name?—I caught a glimpse of his head behind the piano-forte, last week, at Lady I.'s, as I squeezed half in at the door-way. You know he asks a hundred pounds a night, and the Eatingtons are famous for paying in kind;—turtle and champagne for notes—you understand."

" I have it, George," retorted the other; " look at his black coat—depend upon it, it's the Popular Preacher. I never heard him, to be sure; but I'm quite certain it's he."

The reader will be good enough to understand, that this colloquy was uttered chiefly to evince (to each other) the witty pleasantry of the speakers; for I would not have it supposed, that they were so ignorant of that only knowledge to which they even pretended, as not shrewdly to suspect, by his appearance, that the new comer was, in point of fact, one of themselves; though

they had hitherto, by some unaccountable accident, happened not to have become personally acquainted with him.

The door was now opened, and the Dowager Duchess of Dulladone and the two Lady Townlys were announced. The former situation of Lord George and his friend was bliss, compared to that in which they now found themselves; for, besides the danger of being devoured, as they would have expressed it, by the two Lady Townlys, to which their present unprotected state seemed to expose them, their misery was increased by the shame of having been convicted, by a dowager duchess and her two unmarried daughters, of having arrived before them; and the consciousness of having thereby forfeited their best claim to that admiration hitherto so lavishly bestowed upon them from that quarter: the young ladies' idea of being "quite the thing," consisting in nothing so much as pre-eminent unpunctuality.

The stranger bowed slightly to the duchess as she passed to his end of the room, which she answered with an inquiring curtsey,—her Grace's eye-sight, which was none of the best, being now rendered more treacherous by the darkness of room. "Who is it?" said she to Lord George, in a low whisper; to which he replied, "Indeed

I don't know,"—in a tone of voice *all but* impertinently audible. At this moment their host and hostess appeared from an inner room—Lady Eatington employed with a half-drawn-on glove —his lordship applying a half-opened pocket handkerchief to his nose; both which actions were meant to signify rather reproachfully, than apologetically, " You have come sooner than we expected—but here we are."

As we have introduced our readers to their house, we shall be expected to make them acquainted with the master and mistress; but Lord and Lady Eatington were those every-day sort of people of whose characters it is almost impossible to speak in affirmatives. Perhaps the two most positive characteristics of his lordship were, that he was a receiver of rents in the country, and a giver of dinners in town. To speak negatively,—he was—no politician—no farmer—no bel esprit—no connoisseur; but the most distinguished of all these classes met at his house, to pronounce upon the merits of one of the best cooks in Europe: in consideration of which, every one, in accepting his invitations, wrote to him—" Dear Eatington,

" Your's truly."

And every one *enfilèd* the crowd at Almack's,

to squeeze Lady Eatington's hand when she first came to town.

Her ladyship was naturally a very silly, and by education (so called), a very illiterate woman; but long habits of the world enabled her to conceal this; and if she was seldom as well informed as her guests, she was always as well dressed as her dinners—which answered all the purpose.

But how surprised were our young beaux, and our old duchess, to see, that whilst they themselves were casually recognised, the whole of the attention of both host and hostess was directed to the stranger! As the arrival of fresh company made the conversation less constrained, this was explained, though not to the satisfaction of Lord George and Mr. Penryn, by overhearing Lady Eatington telling the duchess, whose ears were almost as defective as her eyes, a long story, of which they caught—"Must recollect"—"Augustus Arlingford"—"long abroad"—"supposed early disappointment"—"recent death of his brother"—"now Lord Ormsby"—"very rich," &c.—which immediately produced from her Grace, in rather a high tone, meant to catch his lordship's ear at some distance,—"Excuse my blindness, my lord—Letitia and Cecilia

—Lord Ormsby—you must recollect Mr. Arlingford, though you were then very young—quite children."

The reflections of Lord George and Mr. Penryn, upon their half-wilful mistake, were not very consolatory, as the former fame of Augustus Arlingford occurred to them in all its pre-eminence. Lord George now recollected that, in his first conference with his tailor, he had been strongly recommended the Arlingford collar, and that a part of his dress, about which he was very particular, had been called "Arlingford's." Mr. Penryn, too, had a disagreeable reminiscence, that whilst still at college, he lost a rouleau, when Mr. Arlingford's colt won the Derby; and both distinctly remembered, that when they first came out, if any very well-looking young man appeared, all the oracles declared that he had "a look of Arlingford;" and this was the man whom they had voted an awkward actor, a squab singer, or a methodist parson.

From this time the cannonade at the street-door became almost incessant, and every possible variety of arrival was constantly swelling the circle, which, with truly English instinct, had formed itself round the place, where (strange to

say) there was *not* a fire; and many were the different ways of presenting themselves, which might be remarked:—First, The tender scion just budding in the first rays of fashion, who, after advancing desperately, and retiring awkwardly from the circle, seemed anxiously to solicit a protecting nod from those around him, confirmative of the acquaintance he hoped he had made. Then came the well-established man of the world, who seemed carelessly to postpone the duties of recognition, till dinner and lights afforded him a more convenient opportunity of doing so. To him succeeded the "ci-devant jeune homme," whose "way of life is fall'n into the sear—the yellow leaf;" who, with outstretched hand, and perpetual "how d'ye do," went the round of the circle, not bating "an inch of his prerogative" of acquaintanceship.

The sun, though this was the time of year when his hours are the most fashionable, had now completely removed the light of his countenance from the party assembled; when, just as Lord Eatington had expressed the necessity of waiting for Sir James and Lady Matilda Dornton, the door was opened, and it was with great difficulty that the profoundest of her would-be admirers

could distinguish, through the deepening dusk, the idol of the day—Lady Matilda Dornton.

But there was one there, from whose eye no darkness could conceal that graceful form. Years had not effaced its impression, and change had not destroyed its interest. Through all his wanderings among the fairest of every clime, Lord Ormsby had still retained, as the *beau idéal* of beauty, his early recollections of her, whom he had parted from with mutual vows of plighted faith—whom he now first met as the wife of another.

Lady Matilda had already made Sir James's excuses, as "detained at the House," and was in her turn putting some indifferent question, when the mention of Lord Ormsby's name caught her quick ear; and she knew that the dreaded moment was arrived which, since his recent return to England, she had felt must soon come. Many of those who have already fixed upon Lady Matilda Dornton as the heroine of this history, will be surprised to learn that she did *not* faint, nor did she in any way outwardly expose herself, as a true heroine ought to have done. But *en revanche* she certainly heard not a word that Lady Eatington, in reply to her question, told her about

" her poor little boy's hooping cough ;" conscious as she was, that her conduct to Lord Ormsby had been in violation of her former engagement, and that her feelings were not in perfect harmony with her existing duties.

I am very much disposed, at this particular time, to enter into some little explanation with my readers, in defence of my heroine (for such in fact she is), and to extenuate in her what I cannot quite excuse. But dinner being at this moment announced, every thing must be postponed for so important an event. All the little management which generally accompanies this announcement, was as usual put in action, but as usual the plots were rather negative than positive. Bores were avoided,—dowagers were shirked,—young ladies, if plain, were allowed to march together in double file,—but nobody was particularly sought,—etiquette preventing precedence from being usurped, even where it had been abdicated by its legitimate possessor. In despair at these symptoms, Lady Eatington, (who, if she had a fault as a dinner-giver, it was that of interfering too much in these matters) exclaimed rather loudly, " Lord Ormsby, take Lady Matilda Dornton." He hesitated a moment, and there was a pause among the

by-standers. He felt it was awkward to advance; but as it was more awkward to decline, half a minute more saw them arm in arm descending the dusky staircase. Just by such uncertain light,—at such an hour,—had they parted two years before, but in how different a scene,—and with what different feelings. It was on the eve of his departure for the Continent, that he at length tore himself from her at the gate of Delaval Park; whilst with looks that pierced the evening gloom, and gently-protracted pressure of the hands, their last words were "We part but to meet again." *Now* they had met to part for ever,—and with averted looks, linked for the moment by the forms of society—the white kid glove hardly touching the black sleeve—the constrained re-union of the moment seemed in mockery of the separation that they felt was final.

Who has not often experienced, that even when the body has sometimes been most fettered and hampered by the restraints of society, the mind, as if in proud assumption of its independence, has made some of its wildest excursions through the boundless regions of past recollections, and fancies for the future? Certain it is that both the lady and gentleman, whom we have left

in the most embarrassing of all possible situations, found their thoughts wandering, with a rapidity truly surprising, through the scenes of their early youth,—collecting, too, the most confused chaos of recollection,—many circumstances trivial at the time,—since forgotten,—but now presenting themselves in all the freshness of yesterday; no two seeming to have the slightest connection, and resembling each other only in this, that the same actors were in each.—And all this passed with an unaccountable celerity, that seemed to mock the calculations of time, whilst they were descending two flights of stairs, with hobbling dowagers before, and giggling misses behind.—Recalling their scattered thoughts as they entered the room, and shewing the most perfect self-command in the eyes of the world, it was impossible for the most attentive observer to discover, by the blaze of light which illuminated the dinner-table, more than a slight nervous convulsion about Lady Matilda's lip, and as slight a contraction on Lord Ormsby's brow. Protracted silence would much have increased the embarrassment of their situation; but, most opportunely, Lord George Darford, who was anxious to repair the mistakes of the last half hour, had posted himself on the other side

of Lady Matilda; and availing himself of his acquaintance with her, fired a random shot between her and her neighbour, which was meant to open a communication between himself and Lord Ormsby;—this had the desired effect. If there be a moment of the day when an Englishman's reserve is vulnerable, it is when he has a soup plate before him; and Lord Ormsby gladly seized the occasion of getting rid of a little of the superfluous awkwardness of his position. An attempt at a conversational trio was the consequence; and the former lovers, who had met as strangers, now found themselves addressing each other as common acquaintances. But their situation, though not remarkable to any one, was by no means comfortable to themselves,—when a slight commotion among the servants at the door produced the announcement of Sir James Dornton and Captain Coulson.

Sir James was, in person, a man who might be of any age that was neither young nor old; and as to general appearance, he was a man who might, if he chose it, have dropped into any vacant chair, at any table, without exciting a remark one way or the other. But such was not at all *his* idea of the situation in society of a man

of fifty thousand a year; and it was with horror that Lady Matilda observed him, with ostentatious punctilio, moving up the whole length of the room, with a sort of jerking strut, to make his excuses to Lady Eatington. Full well did she recollect Lord Ormsby's talent for ridicule; for next to their mutual admiration of each other, there had been no closer bond of union between them than the constant indulgence of a good-humoured species of quizzing, which the high spirits and quick fancies of both induced them reciprocally to vent on all around them.

Lady Matilda knew Lord Ormsby had never before seen Sir James; and it was with no small degree of uneasiness, that she observed his eyes open wider at the side view they caught of the Baronet as he stood by Lady Eatington's chair—his slight rotundity of form well harmonizing with a singular obtuseness of features. But when a rigmarole unnecessary apology, beginning with—"Your Ladyship will excuse"—"Parliamentary duties," &c. ended with something about—"my better half"—she thought that she should have sunk into the ground, at the idea of Augustus having lived to hear her called *better half*.

In the mean time, the general attention was

diverted by the inquiries made of Captain Coulson, who had quietly slipped into his chair, what they had done at the House?—"Oh,—we divided; we were a hundred and something—they were seventy-eight; I know it, because I helped to count them as they went out. I betted young Turford, the new member, a sovereign, that he did not count them right; he made it eighty-two. I suppose he counted the Serjeant at Arms four times." The Captain's laugh at his own wit was rather awkwardly interrupted by an inquisitive gentleman asking what the question was?—"Oh, it was something about a place, or some economical nonsense,"—answered this faithful guardian of the public purse. The inquisitive gentleman now applied himself to Sir James, who readily undertook to explain, but soon got bewildered amongst—"Equalization of duties"—"the revenue increased by being diminished"—"spirit of innovation"—"proper source of influence of the Crown," &c.; and when the more frequent application of spoonfuls of soup had become inadequate to fill up the interstices of his ideas, and just as Lady Matilda, in a furtive glance at Lord Ormsby, perceived the dreaded curl of his lip, the Baronet was most providen-

tially rescued by a prudent pensioner opposite, who, having retired to enjoy the fruits of an active political life, was never anxious, wantonly, to enter on an unnecessary warfare, and therefore interposed with an opportune—" Sir James, a glass of wine;" which had the effect of turning the conversation. I am sorry to be obliged to state, that the party of which I have now detailed so much, was afterwards reckoned a failure, by most who had been invited to join it. Whether I may have mentioned any causes for this, is for the reader to judge. I may, perhaps, in some degree, have explained why those who first met Lord Ormsby there, since his return, voted him not near so pleasant a fellow as Augustus Arlingford. I am obliged also to confess, that from some unknown cause, Lord Eatington's *artiste* did not that day maintain his usual reputation; which may account for the silent sulkiness of those " dainty spirits," (yclept wits,) who are apt to make the " feast of reason and the flow of soul" dependent upon the gratification of their grosser appetites. Certain it is, that immediately after coffee, the party separated with feelings of mental and bodily disappointment.

CHAPTER II.

"*Noja più un miglio in dietro che dieci in avanti*" is an Italian saying, the application of which is certainly as just to a retrograde movement of one's mind in a book as of one's body in a carriage. Admitting this, I am nevertheless obliged to check a little the progress of my tale, whilst I go back for the purpose of picking up two or three stray events, which will be necessary to the carrying of my reader easily to his journey's end. I will promise, however, that if he will have a little patience with me, I will not needlessly linger by the way; and that as much as possible it shall be merely "*reculer pour mieux sauter.*"

Lady Matilda Delaval, whom we introduced in the last chapter as the wife of Sir James Dornton, was an only child, early left, by the death of both her parents, to the absolute guardianship of her uncle, who succeeded his brother in the Earldom of Wakefield, and the splendid domains of Delaval Park.—The person to whom the care

of a lovely and helpless female infant was thus unhappily confided, had passed the first half of his life in the pleasures of unbridled dissipation, and now proceeded to devote the remainder as exclusively to the toils of political ambition. He had just succeeded in ruining the best of constitutions in his early pursuits, when the change in his situation, produced by the death of his brother, enabled him to squander a princely fortune in attaining the objects of his later life; and the period when Matilda entered her eighteenth year found her guardian with one foot in the grave, and the gouty hose, the legacy of his youth, appropriately adorned with the glittering Garter, —the reward of his declining years.

Matilda's father had passed the whole of his married life abroad. Of her mother, little was known, and nothing was ever said by her uncle. It was thought in the family, that she had been a foreigner of distinction; and this supposition seemed in some measure confirmed by the peculiar character of Matilda's beauty; for in her was presented a rare union of those distinguished traits which we are accustomed to call purely national,—a truly insular delicacy of complexion, shaded by locks of raven black; an eye of Ita-

lian fire, quenched only when the ready tear followed an appeal to the feelings of the kindest heart that ever beat in female breast. That she could be the offspring of no *mésalliance*, was marked by her possessing, in perfection, that indescribable air, the effect of which we all feel, though we are at a loss to give it a name. We are, I am aware, accustomed to consider what the French call "*l'air noble*," as inseparable from great descent and high birth; and this opinion we involuntarily maintain, in spite of Bourbon brows, Austrian lips, and all the difficulties one encounters in attempting to recognize this mark of illustrious ancestry in the Royal representatives of the Houses of Nassau and Hapsburg, and the legitimate descendants of Charlemagne. But certain it is, that though in some, the highest born, the want of this may be peculiarly striking, it never graces those who come not of gentle blood; and as certain it is, that there never was so striking a specimen of its matchless charm as was felt by all who saw Matilda Delaval.

It was not in the every-day development of her talents, or the exercise of her feelings, that the singular disadvantages of her education were observable; for she outstripped her instructors

in the usual routine of accomplishments, and she had "a hand open as day to melting charity."

But no mother's watchful care had destroyed the latent seeds of error in her guileless heart, and proportioned in her youth the strength of her principles to the warmth of her feelings. No example of domestic happiness had told her, with the resistless power of habit, that woman's proper sphere is Home. In the succession of governesses whom Lord Wakefield had chosen for her, she was satisfied provided they knew their *métier*, and were neither vulgar nor frightful. And when he (as he called it) retired into the country, from the time that Matilda left the nursery, it was by every variety of needy flattery, and frivolous admiration, that she was surrounded.

At one period, indeed, better prospects seemed opening upon her. Ormsby Castle was in the immediate vicinity of Delaval Park; and Lady Ormsby, who resided here during the minority of her sons, was one of the most unaffectedly good women that ever existed. From her mild and affectionate precepts, Matilda could learn nothing but good; from the society of her daughter Emily, who was about her own age, she

could derive nothing but advantage. It was here, during the occasional visits of the sons to their mother, that the acquaintance between our heroine and Augustus Arlingford, which we have taken up at a later period, commenced. That this was not the least attractive part of the intimacy to Matilda, may be imagined; but that it was the most beneficial, may likewise be doubted.

But be this as it may, Lord Wakefield, who was never suspected of blindness to his own interest, or that of any one connected with him, marked the progress of the connection, and did not appear to disapprove of it. To this line of conduct he was not induced merely by the possession, on the part of Augustus, of a small collateral property which had descended to him as the second son, but by the contingency which seemed probable, from the state of health of his elder brother, then Lord Ormsby, that the marriage of Augustus and Matilda would bring about a very desirable union of the contiguous property of Delaval and Ormsby: for this elder brother had, from a puny child, grown to a sickly man, as weak in mind as in body; which, added to his extreme shyness and dislike to

society, rendered his ever marrying extremely unlikely.

But there was a description of female society in which, as the shyness was not mutual, he found he got on very well; and he ended with making his own legally, a lady, the right to whom had previously been disputed among many: An act which, like other acts for the enclosure of common land, does not always answer to the new proprietor. The immediate effect, however, was a change in the disposition of Lord Wakefield towards our hero. His lordship had previously become rather averse to the connexion, from political differences. This new event very much altered the ultimate prospects of the younger brother; and not anticipating that the happy bridegroom would, as afterwards happened, die within two years without children, he determined that all intercourse between Matilda and her youthful lover should be at an end.

About this time the temporary embarrassments of Augustus (who had been left with that unfortunate modicum of younger brother's fortune, which is too much for a profession, and too little for independence,) materially assisted Lord

Wakefield's views: for an absence on the Continent being indispensable to the arrangement of Mr. Arlingford's affairs, he left England, after taking that tender farewell of Matilda at the gate of Delaval Park, which has been before referred to.

It is necessary here to state, in explanation of what afterwards happened, that though Lord Wakefield was certainly a corrupt politician (if that term implies that self was the governing motive of his political conduct); yet had *he* been by no means successful in feathering his nest, having been as prodigal and wasteful in his own affairs, as in those of the nation. Twice had he been at the whole expense of unsuccessfully contesting the county, by starting Sir Simon Tooley as a candidate for that honour, having no relative of his own to put forward.

When, therefore, the bad times came, he found himself almost inextricably involved; suffering most severely at home from that agricultural distress, which he spoke, for two hours in the House of Lords, to prove did not exist.

Mortgages, bonds, annuities, and every possible species of pecuniary obligation, had been accumulated by him; and it so happened that

one of the very loan-jobbers whom in his public profusion he had most tended to enrich, also reaped the fruits of his private extravagance: —one of those fund-lords, as they have been called, who, in that revolution of property produced entirely by the anti-revolutionists, have certainly become lords of the ascendant.

When, therefore, old Smithson died, leaving all his wealth, and all his claims, to his nephew, Sir James Dornton, for whom, as one of his members, he had previously and easily procured a baronetage; it was with feelings approaching to despair, that Lord Wakefield invited Sir James down, that they might attempt to come to some settlement. Judge then of his delight, when he first perceived that the baronet viewed his niece with a favourable eye. This he soon heard confirmed from Sir James's own lips—for men of business are apt soon to come to the point in these affairs. Connexion, too, was of the utmost importance to Sir James, though beauty was not without its weight; (as where is the man with whom it is?) Here then seemed a way out of all Lord Wakefield's difficulties; namely, that his only creditor should marry the heiress of that part of his property which was entailed. Ac-

cordingly, with that inflexible perseverance with which he always undertook every thing in which his interests were concerned, he at once determined to leave no stone unturned, till he had effected his purpose.

The prospect was in many respects unpromising enough. Sir James was not a man to win a fair lady's heart. He had succeeded to all the purse-proud feeling of a *nouveau riche*, without the shrewd sense which would have enabled him to acquire a fortune for himself. But, as we hinted before, he was most passable, whilst quiescent; and the presence of a man of whom he stood so much in awe, made him negatively much more agreeable, than he ever was afterwards. Lord Wakefield, too, was far too judicious a promoter of his interests, to allow him ever unnecessarily to plead his own cause. But still, when his Lordship himself, in his most statesman-like manner, first broke the proposal to his niece, its reception was any thing but favourable. Though he studiously avoided all allusion to her former attachment to Mr. Arlingford, the knowledge of which he had also carefully concealed from Sir James, yet it was evident that, unless some material change were effected in

Lady Matilda's feelings towards that person, the failure of his scheme was inevitable. The first advance towards this change was soon brought about, though in a circuitous manner, and through no very creditable channel; whether accidentally, or at the instigation of Lord Wakefield, the reader must form his own opinion.

It was about this time that a few of the ultra-loyal, hyper-religious, soi-disant well-disposed part of the community, conceived that they best established their claim to those self-created titles by polluting their Sunday morning's breakfast table with the most infamous publication that ever disgraced the press. Fathers of families, who would have thought their daughters' minds poisoned if they had casually at a theatre listened to a coarse expression of Shakspeare, systematically submitted to their inspection a paper teeming with the grossest allusions and the most flimsily-veiled *double entendres;* thus preparing their minds for the morning duties of that religion which prays deliverance from envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, by the previous enjoyment of the most malignant calumnies on their neighbours, and abstracting their thoughts from the things of this world only to violate, with

envenomed slander, the sanctuary of the tomb. It was in this veracious record of passing events that there appeared, in its usual style of vulgar ribaldry, the most unfounded reports of a supposed intrigue between Augustus Arlingford and a distinguished female resident in Rome, whom to see is to admire. These might have been mere random shots; for that the journal in question should wantonly attempt to defame and ridicule any one, against whom, for whatever reason, it entertained a prejudice, seemed only labouring in its vocation. But the use made of these paragraphs at Delaval Park looked as if they were not written without an object. The arrival of their favourite paper, which distance prevented from coming so appropriately on the Sabbath as in London, was always an event to most of Lord Wakefield's inmates. Weak minds, like diseased stomachs, require unnatural excitement, and this black-begrimed and highly-peppered literary morsel was always devoured with a most unhealthy appetite. It seemed also, that the paragraphs in which Mr. Arlingford's name was mentioned, though never addressed to Lady Matilda, were always made the subjects of conversation within her hearing; and they constantly led to

the recollection of former frailties on his part, for some of which there was unfortunately but too much foundation:—till at last Matilda began seriously to believe that he was a monster of inconstancy, and that he had now forgotten her, as he formerly had others. At this time Lord Wakefield enjoyed the advantage of a most useful ally, in the person of Mrs. Mechlin, a battered old female rake, but a woman gifted beyond the generality of her sex, with the power to "make the worse appear the better reason." She was the only one of the guests of her uncle with whom Matilda lived on any terms of intimacy: it being impossible for any one to see much of her, and resist the charms of her conversation. Her experience, knowledge of the world, and matchless tact, gave her considerable influence over her inexperienced friend; all of which were exerted to bring about the projected marriage with Sir James; which, in putting Lady Matilda at the head of a brilliant establishment, she flattered herself would also secure her a delightfully *un*quiet asylum for her declining years.

It was the gradual operation of all these different causes which at last made Lady Matilda think that she was wrong in rejecting so disdain-

fully what appeared to all around her so very desirable. It must be recollected, that she had always been taught to consider marriage only as an establishment—a sort of snug place for life—of which the duties were easy, and the emolument certain. It is true that she had loved Augustus Arlingford with all the ardour of youth, but also with all the heedless *inconséquence* of that giddy period. She had admired his fine manly figure, laughed at his jokes, wept when he went, and smiled radiantly at his return; but the moment of their separation had been the first at which the idea of their ultimate union had been distinctly arranged between them; and that this should now be, she felt was impossible. Is it to be wondered at, that, alternately threatened and cajoled by her natural guardian, artfully persuaded by her only friend, apparently abandoned by her former lover, and (what perhaps had more effect than all) very little persecuted with the presence of her present suitor, she at last consented to give her hand to Sir James Dornton?

If there be any among those who have trodden the weary ways of high life, who think either the situation or conduct of our heroine forced or

unnatural, let them reflect a moment, and say, (granting that the combination of circumstances may be different,) which of the causes that led to the event described, could not be paralleled in the life of some one of their own female acquaintances.

Hard, indeed, is the fate of many who annually throng the matrimonial market, as, at the regular return of Spring, young ladies come into season with the green peas, and go out with the strawberries. That the matronly merchants who, at this yearly fair, come to barter their fresh commodities of beauty and accomplishments, in exchange for situation and a settlement, should refuse to treat with those who can offer no other security than that doubtful bond,—love in a cottage,—does not seem unreasonable. But that they should measure, with such accuracy, the different sizes of property, and weight of worldly dignities, so that "if the scales do turn, but in the estimation of a hair," their judgment is influenced by it, while manners, person, and character, go for nothing in the balance, does seem rather hard upon those whose interests, after all, must be what they have at heart.

Nor is this all; for the favourable testimony of

a certain set being necessary to the fashionable reputation of a new beauty, the daughters are, upon first coming out, by their mothers' own hand, inoculated with a fancy for "Detrimentals,"—perhaps to prevent their catching it naturally; and thus they become acquainted with the value of those agreeable qualities which are to have no weight with them one way or other in their decision for life. Nor are the truly unexceptionable young men, the objects of the unwearied pursuit of these maternal managers, entirely without just ground of complaint; for such is the anxious precipitancy of the latter, that before, by dancing half a dozen times, with a young lady, the former have satisfied themselves as to her merits in the varied figures of the ball-room, they are expected to have made up their minds as to her qualifications for the somewhat more complicated mazes of matrimony; and, accordingly, they are peremptorily asked whether their intentions are serious, whilst they are yet occupied in rounding off their first well-turned compliment.

It is, indeed, wonderful, that connexions so inauspiciously contracted, should so often lead to the mutual satisfaction of both parties. Perhaps

it might be possible to afford a plausible solution of this difficulty; but I have already broken my anti-digressive compact with my reader; and therefore hasten to resume the thread of my story.

The day of the marriage was, indeed, a happy one for Lord Wakefield. Sir James, in consideration of the large fortune which Matilda brought him at once, and of the residue of her uncle's property, which must come to her at his death, had cancelled all the pecuniary obligations which existed between them; and, as Lord Wakefield left the party he had assembled at the marriage feast, where, in honour of the occasion, he had broken the forced habits of temperance to which he was now reduced, a new world of ambition seemed opening to him, by the revival of his financial resources. It was but two hours after these delightful visions were dancing before his eyes, when the party below were alarmed by a violent ringing at his bell, and he was found suffering agonies with the gout in his stomach, which increased in violence, in spite of all the skill of his physician. On the table at which he had just been sitting, was a paper, apparently in his hand writing, which, as it might be of

importance, was examined. It proved to be an unfinished letter to the Minister, which began—

" My dear Lord,

" Hearing, from very good authority, that the precarious state of poor Lord Snugborough's health renders his life very"——uncertain, he would have added,—in all the presumptuous confidence of frail mortality;—but it was a sentence he was doomed never to finish;—the very post which was to have conveyed the expression of his reversionary hopes, informed the Minister that the Noble Earl's own honours were at his disposal, for some equally greedy expectant; and poor Lord Snugborough continues, to this day, in the undisturbed possession of many well-earned dignities and emoluments.

To Matilda's feeling heart, the sudden loss of her only near relation, though he had never been a kind one, was nevertheless a great shock. As for Sir James, he vented his grief at his accession to thirty thousand a year, by announcing the fact to all his connexions, on paper with a black border of a most preposterous breadth.

The principal effect of this change in their situation certainly was, that the new-married cou-

ple saw considerably less of each other than they would otherwise have done. During their stay at Delaval, Lady Matilda was generally employed in little charitable details for improving the comfort of those whom she considered as now dependent on her. Sir James, on the other hand, was occupied with many wholesome schemes for the improvement of the property to his own advantage.

At length, the first levee of the year found them in town, where Sir James was presented to his Sovereign, with weepers on his hands, and the George and other insignia of the Orders of the late Lord Wakefield in them; and was received with that well-known graciousness, which, whenever the illustrious Individual pleases, is personal, but which is purely official when lavished on a man like Sir James Dornton—a ministerial member, with six seats at his command.

From that time forward, Sir James was regular in his Parliamentary duty, of sleeping six hours every night at the House, till wanted to vote on questions which he would not have understood if he had heard; whilst Lady Matilda, with a face and figure which commanded universal admira-

tion, and a manner which checked individual impertinence, shone forth "the glass of fashion, and the mould of form—The observed of all observers."

CHAPTER III.

At the breaking up of Lord Eatington's dinner party, Lord Ormsby was tempted by the fineness of the night, (the rarest of all temptations in England), to wander about the streets, occupied by his own reflections; when his desultory course was for a moment impeded by a brilliant equipage, which, after swinging against the curb-stone past several doors, stopped with a sudden jerk at that of a splendid mansion, just before *he* arrived at the same point. The foot pavement was immediately fully occupied by the two footmen, who proceeded with much needless bustle to the ceremony of unloading. He was involuntarily stopped therefore, whilst this was effected; and, as he stood on one side, completely veiled in that obscurity in which the capricious economy of gas still indulges five houses out of six, he thought that, by the partial light from the open door of the hall, he recognised a female form, in the lineaments of which, he could not

be mistaken. It was indeed Lady Matilda Dornton; who, having deposited Sir James at Boodle's, was returning home. He fancied that, before exposing herself to the blaze of light from within, a hand hastily raised to her face chased away a lingering tear. He had just persuaded himself that this could be but fancy, when, in reply to a question from a servant as to the carriage, a voice, every note of which vibrated on a responsive chord in his breast, answered, in a tone evidently of stifled emotion, "No more to-night." She is *not* happy then, was the suspicion which crossed his mind as he passed on: and though he would have given the world to have made her so, it is certain that this new view of the subject made him see, with a much less jaundiced eye, the outward advantages by which she was surrounded. As he pursued his wanderings, the idea often occurred to him, that this unhappiness might be connected with the meeting of that evening; but it was as often rejected, as the groundless suggestion of unworthy vanity, utterly unsupported by any thing in her past conduct. The result of these contradictory musings was, that when at length he found himself at his hotel, he gave orders that his

travelling carriage should be in readiness next morning, to convey him to Ormsby Castle.

When Matilda had dismissed her carriage, she ascended to her boudoir. Of all the happiest refinements of luxury, the result of so many centuries of progressive civilization, there is nothing like a lady's boudoir. The outward ostentation of a splendid establishment, and the solid magnificence of the choicest table, are as nothing, compared to that union of attractions which here is found, all partaking of the delicacy of character of its fair proprietor; the privacy and seclusion adding to the value of all the luxuries with which it is crowded. Matilda's dressing-room was a matchless model of its kind. It is true, that the approaches to the inner recesses of this magic bower were, like fair Rosamond's of old, somewhat intricate; but the labyrinth was only formed by a redundancy of varied comforts, and the universal presence of organized confusion. Whilst the toilet-table groaned with caskets, into which the mines of Golconda seemed emptied, and shone with glittering cases where all the perfumes of Arabia had been distilled, around were scattered the various implements for music and drawing, and the still more

various articles commonly called nic-nackerings, the fruits of the frivolous ingenuity of every country, from China to the Channel. The walls were divided between mirrors, whose merit was multiplying for a moment, a form, otherwise unique; and a few shelves of books, whose judicious selection proved, that the cultivation of the mind was here, at least, as important an object as the adornment of the person.

As Matilda entered, she seemed the guardian genius of taste in this her favourite temple. Here her return had been most impatiently expected by her attendant spirit, little Ma'mselle Felicie.

The fact is, that this was a night which had long been looked forward to, as being fixed for one of those forced exertions which the London season often makes in its old age, to keep itself alive; and which frequently vent themselves, as on the present occasion, in a fancy ball. Matilda's costume was to be at once strikingly becoming and novel; it had been chosen by her with her usual superior taste, and had been executed by the unrivalled handicraft of her Parisian abigail. Felicie had been attentively admiring her own work, and now met her mistress, hold-

ing in her hands in triumph a pair of the prettiest shoes in the world, compared to which, Cinderella's slipper would have appeared clumsy. These, as the dress required they should be in character, had been sent for expressly from Paris, and had miraculously arrived before the ball was over and forgotten; and the national little French woman now proceeded to enlarge, with much volubility, on the peculiar punctuality of her countrymen; when she was struck, as if by a thunderbolt, at the sudden declaration of her mistress, that she was not going out that night. Recovering by degrees from the shock she exclaimed, "Mais *donc*, Miladi est malade," with the protracted theatrical emphasis on the word *donc*, which is meant to express the sudden discovery of an unwelcome explanation of a circumstance otherwise perfectly unintelligible. "No, I'm quite well," said Lady Matilda; "leave me—leave me alone." Doctor Willis never left a patient with a shake of the head more expressive of his opinion as to the seat of the malady, than that given by Felicie, as, obeying the command of her mistress, she quitted the room.

"Alone! yes, I am alone—alone in the world,"

thought Matilda, as, seating herself at her dressing table, she buried her taper fingers in her beautiful hair,—discomposing its studied arrangement in a reckless manner, which would have confirmed Felicie's opinion; whilst, pressing the palms of her hands firmly against her closed eyelids, she seemed anxious to exclude all outward consolation. Her thoughts wandered mournfully on past times, and what she was, and what she might have been; and the sad conviction pressed stronger on her mind than it had ever done before, that all the budding hopes of happiness, which she had cherished in her youth, had been withered even at that altar where they ought to have ripened into maturity; and that returning thence, her light spirit depressed, and her warm heart chilled, she had found the active exercise of her affections end, where it ought to have begun. In the gay world an universal buzz of eager admiration followed her wherever she moved; but at home her talents were wasted—her accomplishments unnoticed. At home, the playful excursions of her buoyant fancy were checked, for want of a congenial spirit; and the spontaneous ebullitions of her sensitive heart were smothered in the utter absence of kindred sympathy.

As, oppressed with these reflections, she again raised her head from her hands, the first object that met her casual glance, was the brilliant and varied display of her open jewel-box. "I cannot talk to *you*," she ejaculated; "I cannot confide to you my feelings,—yet it is to you, to such as you, to such cold and senseless splendor, that I am wedded." The contemptuous expression of her eye suddenly changed, as she caught a glimpse, amid all this glittering finery, of one ornament, simple almost to plainness. It was a small locket that had once been Emily Arlingford's,—it had been an early gift from her to her friend, before either had completely grown to womanhood, and when first the duties of neighbourhood had completely melted into the pleasures of intimacy. It contained her own hair, and that of her brother Augustus. In a playful moment, and with a girlish jest, she had taken it from her own neck to encircle that of Matilda. Matilda had not lately seen it; for Felicie, who thought it by no means worthy of the good company it kept, generally concealed it under some of its more splendid neighbours. But now she seized it with eagerness, as it recalled, with the freshness of yesterday, the day when it was given. She did not raise it to her

lips—a certain consciousness of feeling prevented her—but her eyes continued long riveted on it as by fascination. At last, a forced exertion of her better judgment convinced her, that nothing could be more injurious, or less correct, than the continuance of this state of morbid indulgence. She resolutely asked herself the question, why all her domestic discomforts had this night appeared so much more trying than ever? and the answer was any thing but satisfactory to her conscience.—"No," she thought, "it is not by tender recollections of what once was, or by vain repinings at what is my lot, that I can hope to acquire strength for the performance of all the dreary duties I have undertaken. My best hope is, patient endurance,—my surest safeguard, universal indifference." Then, with an effort which had now become habitual to her, she restored herself to that outward appearance of languid composure, which, except when exhilarated by the temporary excitement of a crowded room, had generally marked her demeanour since her marriage. Hardly had this salutary change been effected, when a knock at the street-door announced the return of Sir James, which was presently confirmed by his creaking shoes upon the stairs. Sir James was just the

sort of man whose shoes always creak. Liable as we all are to error, I would not judge too severely an occasional misdemeanour even of this serious description. But any *politesse*-police magistrate in England would have convicted Sir James as an incorrigible creaker.

Roused by these unwelcome sounds, and again summoning Felicie, Matilda hastened to put on the semblance of that repose, the reality of which the suppressed agitation of her feelings seemed to render extremely improbable.

CHAPTER IV.

When Matilda the next morning entered the breakfast room, she found Sir James already seated at the table, and, by a certain important twist of his chair, evidently about to make some proposition to which he attached no small degree of consequence. When this was the case, he was apt, with a confusion of expression by no means uncommon, to invert the order of his discourse, whilst he *seriatim* propounded sundry weighty reasons for inducing him to do something at which no one could guess till the conclusion of an apparently interminable sentence. The suspence in which this kept Matilda, was in the present instance protracted by an incessant insertion of breakfast, which met his words on the threshold of his lips.

"I have been thinking, that as we are not going abroad for a fortnight, and one should always be civil to country neighbours; it is the duty of great landed proprietors, and I am above think-

ing ill of a man for his politics, particularly now we have by *our* firmness put down the Radicals, (this coffee is as tasteless as Hunt's,) and the opposition is quite contemptible; (some more butter, if you please;) that we may as well ask Lord Ormsby to dinner." At this unexpected conclusion, Matilda involuntarily exclaimed, "Oh no,—by no means—it is not at all necessary." Sir James looked at her for a moment, evidently surprised at the vehemence of the objection. "It is very odd that whoever I take a fancy to, you as surely have a dislike for. I thought you seemed very rude to him yesterday. But recollect, Lady Matilda, 'Love me, love my dog.'" There was something so ludicrous in the application of this saying, to an obligation on her part to like Lord Ormsby for Sir James's sake, that Matilda, although it was a serious subject to her, yet, with her naturally quick sense of the ridiculous, had some difficulty in suppressing a laugh, as she quietly answered that he had never seen Lord Ormsby until the night before. But he only replied, that he had taken a fancy to him—that he had just come from abroad, and therefore could tell him many things he wanted to know. "Indeed, I asked him after dinner whether he had

had the springs of his carriage corded—and whether they got good claret in Italy; and I saw, by his answers, that he was a superior person."

Lady Matilda merely replied, that she did not mean to doubt that he would be perfectly competent to inform him on such points.

"Aye," said Sir James, "and my sister, Mrs. Hobson, is just come to town from Manchester. She, you know, is going to take her girls abroad for the last finish, and we may have them the same day, and he may tell us all about it together."

Matilda's dislike to the embarrassment of receiving her former lover as a guest in her own house, was not at all diminished by the prospect of having a vulgar family party to meet him. But there seemed no remedy, as Sir James proceeded to sally forth to drop a preparatory card at Lord Ormsby's; leaving Matilda to receive the Hobsons, who had arrived in town the night before, and were expected to call;—and saying, as he went out,—"You never saw my sister, Mrs. Hobson,—you must like her,—very nice woman. Connexion, not all I could have wished;—in my mind, great difference between a warehouse, and a counting-house,—but Hobson's a warm man,

—Hobson's a very good name at Manchester." "Hobson a good name at Manchester!" thought Lady Matilda, "then what a pity that they ever brought it away, or did not borrow another for travelling purposes." And she prepared to receive her guests.

Miss Betty Dornton was some years older than her brother; and having brought her charms to market at a time when the prospects of her family were not so extensive as they afterwards became, (old uncle Smithson having then formed only the *nucleus* of that immense wealth, which he afterwards scraped together; and certainly having no intentions of bequeathing it in a lump to any one,) her marriage with Mr. John Hobson was not at the time objected to. He was a steady, calculating foreman, in a large manufactory at Manchester. This situation he had gradually improved into that of a master of foremen; and his small back lodging he had changed into the largest extent of staring brick front in Manchester.

Mrs. Hobson, at the time of her marriage, was a silly, showy, bustling, chattering little body; with a brisk figure, and brisker tongue, good humoured, illiterate, and vulgar. Twenty years,

and more than half as many children, had rather taken from her briskness of figure—her person seeming to have kept pace with her fortunes, in increase; but nothing had abated her activity of tongue, as Lady Matilda soon found to her cost, when the servant announced Mrs. Hobson, the Miss Hobsons, and Master Hobson; the last a hobble-de-hoyish schoolboy. The three Miss Hobsons I shall not attempt to describe individually as to character, till the reader becomes by degrees better acquainted with them. In their dress there was a sisterly sameness, consisting, as it did, of bright pea-green cassimere pelisses, superabundantly bebraided, and black beaver bonnets with pink linings. The only distinction in their appearance, was, that Miss Hobson's round rosy face was—one can't say shaded, with small bright red corkscrew curls; whilst Miss Anne, from having rather a higher bridge to her nose than was common in the family, had taken the Grecian line, and had accordingly drawn two long straight strips of sandy hair across her temples, as she thought *à la madonna*. The third, Jemima, was at that becoming age when young ladies' hair is neither long nor short. As to the conversation of these Manchester graces,—being in

considerable awe of a person of whom the Morning Post said so much as it did of Lady Matilda, they confined that to occasional verbal corrections of their mother's slip-slop, which their boarding-school education fully qualified them to give. As to Mrs. Hobson, she felt no such awe as that with which the name and fame of Lady Matilda inspired her daughters. Ever since her brother's marriage, she had persuaded herself that her own consequence was so much increased by the closeness of the connexion, that she did not feel abashed, even in the presence of the cause of all that additional consequence. So she waddled straight up to Lady Matilda, in a scarlet velvet pelisse which made the sun hide his diminished head in the dog-days; and after a sisterly salutation, said,—(staring full at her,)—"Well, I'm sure Jem couldn't have done better." She then broke at once into the subject now always uppermost in her thoughts; namely, the extraordinary circumstance of her being actually about to go abroad.

"Well," said she, "I hope that we shall all live as one family in foreign parts. To think of my going trapesing out of Old England! but my daughters must have the same *advaantages* as the Miss Tomkins's, though they did make

old Tomkins a knight the other day. But an't my brother a baronet? to say nothing of you, Lady Matilda. Then Dr. Snook says, that Jemima is rather *pilmonary*, and that the air of Italy will do her good; and to be sure, if it was not for fear of the *muskitty's*, or bandittis, or what do they call them as attacks one there, I should like Italy well enough, and to see the Pope, and the Venus of Meddi—what is it, my dear?" (appealing to one of her daughters.) "Medici, Mamma," said Miss Anne. "Aye—Medici—and the Saint Peter's—but I don't think so much of that, because we've got a Saint Peter's at Manchester. And that great cascade (Turny, or what do they call it?) that Briggs—old Briggs of our town's son—shewed a fine picture of it, as he did there at our exhibition, with the water all so white, and the rocks so black, and the trees so green; very pretty it was, and little Briggs himself sitting on a three-legged stool, with it all splashing about him, poor fellow;—and then that Capital Colossus as the old Romans made.—"Coliseum, Mamma," said Miss Hobson; and "the Capitol," said Miss Anne, "is a building by itself."—"Very well, my dears, a building by itself, is it? I thought it was in Rome—but Jem

ought to know, for I suppose that's what they teach him at school." This changed the current of her ideas, and called Lady Matilda's attention to a nuisance which the presence of more active annoyances had hitherto prevented her from observing.

Of all the demands that the ties of connexion can make upon one's patience, there is nothing like the precocious introduction, into general society, of a genuine school-boy; where, either by his uneasy awkwardness, he makes all who see him equally uncomfortable, or, by his pert self-sufficiency, causes a more active disturbance.—Sir James's saying, which he so aptly applied, of "Love me, love my dog," is nothing to the trial of, Love me, love my school-boy. It is true, though, that school-boys are, after all, (to use a metaphor peculiarly suited to the Hobson family,) the raw material of which the finished articles, most sought for in a drawing-room, must be manufactured. There are, also, two varieties in the species; your private school-boy is much worse than your public: by private schools, being meant all, however large and however open, except two or three, where the scholars are more select and gentleman-like; and which schools are therefore called public. And never was there seen a more

regular specimen of the worst kind of school-boy, than that which met Matilda's eyes in the person of Jem Hobson, as he sat on the very edge of the sofa; his pale, shrunk, nankeen trowsers, having worked their way up his spindle leg, which was enveloped in a wrinkled cotton stocking; the collar of his new coat, and his black stock, alone, showing any embryo symptoms of incipient dandyism; his sandy hair plaistered sideways with a wet brush, off his snubby, chubby face; and his hands occupied in studiously brushing, the wrong way, the nap of his shapeless hat.

"Put your hat down, my dear Jem," said Mrs. Hobson. "He is Sir James's godson; we reckon him very like him," appealing to Matilda, who, though she said nothing, could not deny the imputation.

"I am sorry his uncle's out. I brought him here, as he is not going abroad with us, on purpose to see him, as it is right boys should know who they are to look to. Jem, I'm sure, will do something for his godson, little Jem, as we call him: perhaps, make him a Parliament-man; it is as good a trade as any; at least, I'm sure, so uncle Smithson found it. They say, he must make six; so he may as well have one of

his own kin as another. Who knows but, in time, Jem may live to be a—what was that great gentleman, who so civilly wrote to thank our people for killing the Radicals?"—"A Secretary of State, Mamma," said Miss Hobson.

"Ah! Why should not Jem live to be a Secretary of State, Lady Matilda? I can assure you," continued the fond mother, "that all pains have been taken with his speechifying;—Jem, suppose you let your aunt hear that speech that I say makes me think I hear you in the House of Commons." Matilda submitted to this, as a minor evil to hearing the mother talk about him; and Jem, who, with all his shyness, preferred to his present state of awkward inaction, that exposure to which habit had hardened him, immediately prepared to comply; and, throwing his hand stiffly up, like a way-post, began, "My name is Norval,"—in that gruffish squeak, and with that measured twang, which generally accompany such exhibitions. He was proceeding, with wonderful success; and had just arrived at the point where—

"A band of fierce barbarians, from the hills,
Rushed, like a torrent, down upon the vale,
Sweeping our flocks and herds,"——

when the door opened, and in walked our two friends of the preceding evening, Lord George Darford and Mr. Penryn, who usually hunted time in couples, and meant to kill half an hour with Lady Matilda. Great, indeed, was their astonishment at the party they found assembled, and the exhibition they interrupted. Our young actor might have added—

"Our shepherds fled for safety and for succour,"

for sudden was the flight this produced in the family;—Mrs. Hobson displaying to the still wondering eyes of the intruders, as she moved towards the door, the broad back of her splendid pelisse, whose unequally-worn texture shewed at once, that her velvet was English, and her habits sedentary. The young ladies followed in a cluster, stooping, shuffling, poking, and using every other means by which English young ladies of a certain class get out of the room.—Roscius, alone, "still hovered about the enemy"—till, with some difficulty, he had extricated his shapeless hat from under the feet of Lord George, who was, by this time, sprawling on the sofa; and having achieved this, with a formal bow, which he had learnt at the same time as his speech, he left the room.

"What, in the name of wonder," said Lord George, "is that young Esquimaux, whom we found exhibiting; and who are his attendant squaws?"

"That Lady was the sister of Sir James; the others were her children;" Lady Matilda replied, in a tone calculated to stop any further attempts at ridicule.

"Quite *manqué*, our party at Eatington's," said Mr. Penryn, thinking it right to turn the conversation. "A Quaker's meeting would have been more lively," added Lord George. "I did not find it pleasant, certainly," Lady Matilda sincerely replied.—"Only think," said Mr. Penryn, "of their asking, together, two rival purveyors of wit; who, besides the natural *jalousie de métier*, had had a downright quarrel. Of course, as always happens, they got next each other; and were so occupied in shewing that they did not mind it, that they could think of nothing else. But there is nothing so proverbially unlucky as the lottery of a dinner-table. One is sure to get next the person one most wishes to avoid; don't you think so, Lady Matilda?"

This appeal was made at random, and without

any consciousness of how conclusive a testimony she could bear to the justness of his proposition. But Lord George saved her the awkwardness of assent, by taking the allusion to himself. "I trust, Lady Matilda will not assent to a doctrine against which I must vehemently protest," said he, with a slight bow. "Oh! you George!—Aye, I had forgotten," said his friend; "but I don't think your other neighbour, Lady Matilda, seemed properly aware of the peculiar advantages of his situation; I never was so disappointed in a man in my life as in Lord Ormsby."

"We used to reckon him a very pleasant fellow, before he went abroad," said Lord George; "I recollect, when I first came out, no party was quite the thing, without Augustus Arlingford."

The reader will probably observe, that there is a little anachronism in this statement of Lord George's; and that his recollection of their previous acquaintance had not occurred to him at the meeting of the evening before.

"But," Mr. Penryn continued, "with all his fun, he had always an infernal sentimental turn. Just before he went abroad, we all thought that he had got some little rural attachment—some Clari, in the country."

" Perhaps, then, after all," said Lord George, " the constant swain is going to marry her; for as I was coming to you, I saw him get into his travelling-carriage, at Mivart's."

This intelligence, which was communicated towards the conclusion of their visit, was highly satisfactory to Lady Matilda; not only because it relieved her from the immediate embarrassment of the intended dinner, which her acquaintance with the Hobson family had not rendered less formidable, but also on general grounds; for, however she might exert herself in public, the experience of her feelings of the preceding evening, convinced her, that the less she saw of Lord Ormsby the better.

CHAPTER V.

Thanks to Mac Adam and a rapid succession of "first and second turn out," our hero found himself, towards the evening of the morrow, at the lodge gate leading to Ormsby Castle.

Home is said to possess an universal attraction, felt by the traveller in all his wanderings,—"Who drags at each remove a lengthening chain;"—and the return to the scenes of our youth, at whatever age, and under whatever circumstances, is supposed to impart a till then unknown pleasure. But, like the seeds of all human passions, however equally innate in the breast of all, its development is dependent on the habits of the person, and its growth proportioned to the strength of the charm by which it exerts its influence.

The fanciful Gall may find the thieving boss, or bump, alike prominent on the cranium of the vagabond and the right honourable. On one, its impulse irresistibly leads to felony and the gal-

lows; on the other, at most, it can only tend to suspicion at the gaming-table, or stifled disgrace as a public defaulter.

And so it is with respect to the universality of this attraction towards home. The returned seafaring apprentice, who pokes his way back to his indigenous garret in Wapping, can form but a faint idea of the proud sensations of Lord Ormsby, as he again entered the magnificent domains of his native place. On every side thousands of rival monarchs of the wood, with all the accumulated dignity of centuries, and all the freshness and gaiety of a young summer foliage, waved their outstretched arms at the arrival of their lord and master.

Varied glades of verdant lawn conducted the eye where, from the summit of remote and apparently inaccessible crags, the wilder scions of the forest nodded their distant homage. The mountain stream roared its rude welcome from afar, which, at its nearer approach, was softened into the silent tribute of an extensive lake. The setting sun lent his oblique rays to glitter through every branch, and sparkle on the surface of the waters, greeting our hero with a natural illumination, compared with which the greatest artificial

efforts of the kind, that ever victory bought, or faction extorted, were dreary and pitiful. It was thus that Lord Ormsby arrived at the mansion of his fathers, for the first time as its master.

Let the landed interest grumble as they will at the depreciation of their property, the most successful stock-jobbing cannot give to "airy nothings, a local habitation and a name." The honest pride in the hereditary possession of an English gentleman's seat, is a feeling which no mushroom wealth can buy. An old country place is a friend whose aspect no neglect can change,—a mistress whose beauties increase with age. All other companions, absence alienates, caprice disgusts, perhaps whilst yet in youth —or as age advances, increasing infirmities render as crabbed as ourselves, or death prematurely tears from us. But this our inanimate mother meets us on our return, the last day the same as the first; with all the freshness and kindness one left: the marks of our boyish fancy, not neglected or thrown aside, but cherished even as we imprinted them; only improved in one's absence into a lovely maturity. The statesman, who spurns all other domestic ties, yet owns this power of attachment to his hereditary place; and

the greatest master of human nature who ever wrote, makes the most ambitious of men, King-killer Warwick, at the point of death, most lament

"My parks, my walks, my manors which I had."

Happy the man who feels these enjoyments, and limits his other desires to giving, to all around who are dependent on him, cause to share in this feeling for the place of their birth. That such is the contented lot of many now living, there can be no doubt; and yet they allow some of their own body annually to slander them by the monstrous absurdity of the assertion, that the slightest alteration in the game laws would drive them from the country.

Do they mean that the continuance of an absurd, tyrannical, and, as it has been proved, most insufficient and abortive system, for protecting their monopoly in a healthy and manly amusement, is their only object in life? Do they mean that they will abdicate all their gracious and peaceful prerogatives, as petty sovereigns, if they are not allowed also the truly Kingly Right of making war upon their neighbours?

But the fact is, that this is an idle threat. The

country gentlemen will continue to reside on their estates, even though (which will never be the case,) there should not be one "coney, hare, pheasant, partridge, mallard, duck, teal, or widgeon, grouse, heathcock, or moorgame," left in the country: for they never will have the bad taste willingly to emigrate to a ricketty two-windowed lodging in a watering-place, with bad port, retailed by the dozen; one fat joint of roasted meat, that offends their nose all the morning, before its appearance, and their palate afterwards; with a dark, dusty reading-room, for a resource, and that very unqualified semi-gentleman sort of person, whom they so much abominate, for society; in preference to the indulgence of old-fashioned hospitality amongst their neighbours, and the management of their own concerns as an occupation.

Whatever Lord Ormsby's abstract opinion was, upon this subject, it was not called into play upon the present occasion. As it was still early in the month of July, our hero had nothing but solitude to expect during his *sejour* here, as his mother had gone abroad soon after the unfortunate marriage of her eldest son; principally to avoid taking any decided step about a connection which, as it was irremediable, her kind-

ness tempted her to forgive; but which, she felt, her duty towards her daughter enjoined her, as much as possible, to avoid.

He was received, at the hall-door, by Mrs. Brown, the old housekeeper, a sort of heir-loom in the family; whose fondness for him had often shewed itself in his childhood, by first stuffing him with sweetmeats, and then unmercifully dosing away the mischief she had done. She now met him, not quite with that warmth of manner which the affection excited by his uniform kindness would have led one to expect; but the fact was, that the joy which she felt, as a good-hearted old woman, was not a little alloyed by her professional regret, as an experienced housekeeper, that he had come a day sooner than she expected. This, however, having been explained away, and an assurance given, that any want of due preparation was all owing to his own fault, she led the way to his mother's sitting-room. This, she said, she thought he would prefer, whilst he was alone, as it would remind him of old times. "You will find it pretty much as you left it," she said; "for when your poor brother lost himself, (God forgive him!) and they were coming here, I locked it up; for

I could not bear that the like of she should be where my Lady used to sit."

This disgraceful marriage had been a terrible thorn in the side of poor Mrs. Brown, completely identified, as she conceived herself, with the family dignity; and it had added to the irritability of a temper, originally none of the best. Lord Ormsby, rather from thinking that he ought to say something, than from its being a subject which he wished to enter upon with Mrs. Brown, asked if his brother had ever lived much there.

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Brown; "they comed with all their low set, but only staid two nights; why, Heaven only knows."

This was not quite the plain and simple truth; as, besides Heaven, Mrs. Brown herself well knew why; having been indeed the cause: for one of Lady Ormsby's servants having required the attendance of Mrs. Brown in a summary way, not very soothing to her self-importance; calling out—"Your *Mistress* wants you;"—"*Mistress*, indeed!" retorted the soured purveyor of sweets;—"*my* Mistress! more people's *Mistress* than mine, if all was told." This having been immediately repeated to her Ladyship,

she had assaulted the housekeeper in a manner which shewed, that want of practice, since her elevation to the peerage, had not injured that easy fluency, in a dialect called slang, in which ladies of her description often acquire a most astonishing proficiency. It being impossible to restore peace, her Ladyship's unhappy husband had bribed her, (which was the only sort of influence he ever possessed over her,) to quit the castle; to which arrangement she the more readily agreed, as a country residence was not exactly what suited her best.

In their way to his mother's room, Lord Ormsby and his guide passed through a long gallery of family pictures; the first of which, by Holbein, was a female, with little grey eyes, and sandy hair, combed straight back from the forehead, and a stiff figure, amazingly squeezed, starched, and be-ruffed; and on a tesselated pavement, at her little pinched feet, was written, "Lady Matilda Delaval, first Baroness Ormsby." This had been early subject of merriment to the happy trio, which consisted of her twenty times great-grand-children and great-niece. Many were the jests at the pretended likeness between her and her merry namesake; and great the

affected wonder, as to who should be the pendant on the vacant pannel at the other end of the room. The recollections which the sight of this picture painfully excited in the mind of Ormsby, seemed also to press strongly on that of Mrs. Brown, who had also, probably, speculated, in her way, upon the future occupant of the spare pannel. "You will find, in my Lady's room, Mr. Augustus, (my Lord, I mean,) some music and drawing-books of Lady Matilda Delaval's, (Dornton's I mean); I locked the door up, as I said, when that happened, without looking what was in the room. Perhaps you will find some way to return them to her, now she's married,—not quite as was expected, to be sure." And she stopped a moment, and gave something between a sigh and a wheeze; caused, partly by the steep staircase they had been mounting, and partly by the recollection of the disappointment of long-cherished steward's-room gossip, when they used to toast the union of the handsomest couple in the county—Augustus Arlingford and Matilda Delaval. On the floor, at the other end of the gallery, leaning against the empty pannel, was an open deal packing-case, sent by Annabella, Lady Ormsby, as she now called herself, con-

taining her portrait, in the character of Diana, with Ormsby Castle in the back ground. Whether the resemblance in feature was as striking as the choice of character was appropriate, was not easily to be decided; for where the head should have been, only appeared the inverted form of a well-shaped leg, naked to the knee: for when, upon opening the case, Mrs. Brown had discovered who its unwelcome inmate was, she had left her just as she had found her, turned topsy-turvy, with her head on the floor, and her heels in the air. This neglect, on the part of Mrs. Brown, of her usual habit of enforcing rigid discipline in the drill and deportment of every article of furniture, from a picture to a poker, was intentional; conveying, as she thought, an insult, appropriately disgraceful, for her intrusion amongst the immaculate inhabitants of the gallery; and in this opprobious position she left her, to await the final judgment of her new master, which, she trusted, would be for the flames. But, on the present occasion, Mrs. Brown passed on in silence, leaving, to a future time, her appeal to his Lordship for his sentence upon it; not wishing, unnecessarily, to enter on so hateful a subject, at their first interview.

When she left Lord Ormsby in his mother's

room, he acknowledged to himself with pleasure, that it was indeed in the same state as when he last saw it. Warmly attached to his mother and sister, many combined reminiscences of their presence were highly interesting to him; but what he most eagerly sought for was that collection of little things belonging to Lady Matilda, which Mrs. Brown had announced to him. One of the first that fell into his hands was a small drawing-book, which opened accidentally at a slight sketch of himself. The history of this sketch he well remembered. It was occasioned by some singularity in the shooting dress in which he had appeared, and which struck Matilda and his sister Emily as fantastical. The costume was recorded with much quaint humour, but the face was any thing but caricature; and, though sketchy, was evidently the work of one who had found pleasure

> ——— "to sit and draw
> His arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls,
> In her heart's table."

The surface of the drawing was disfigured by five or six long slender pencil marks, which, in a moment of playful waywardness she had scratched over it, when asked to shew it to him for whom it was intended.

How uncertain and irregular are the approaches to the seat of all human passions. Sometimes the most trifling circumstance will casually find its way, by a short cut, direct to the heart, when a regularly connected chain of sentimental associations will in vain attempt an advance towards it. There was nothing tended more irresistibly, though against his better judgment, to revive former feelings in the mind of Lord Ormsby, than this foolish trifle which he held in his hand,—connecting, as he did, the arch glance of the single-hearted, affectionate girl who had drawn it, with the tearful eye of the care-worn woman whom he had seen two nights before; and contrasting the warm and friendly hand, which in a playful struggle he had endeavoured to prevent from destroying her performance, with that which coldly touched his sleeve as he handed her down Lord Eatington's staircase. Poor Matilda! in a hasty moment, as she had scratched those feeble lines to efface his likeness from the paper, even so she had endeavoured to obliterate his image from her heart, and even so she had destroyed its value and rendered it unfit to be preserved. But in spite of her abortive efforts, the earlier impressions remained in all their former freshness, beneath.

The next morning, the lawyers who were to meet Lord Ormsby from town on business, not being arrived, he determined on a ride for a ride's sake; and, mounting a favourite horse, he, occupied with his own reflections, left the choice of the road a good deal to the animal, who in the exercise of his discretion took him through the grounds, and several miles of shady lanes, to the gates of Delaval Park,—at which he made a dead point. At this Lord Ormsby expressed his first symptoms of difference of opinion; but the horse, who entertained a lively recollection of Lord Wakefield's corn-bins, had been lately unused to controul, and in his best days was a little bigotted in his own opinions as to the road to be taken—confirmed, too, in this instance, by the certainty, from all former experience, that he was indisputably right, he thought proper to resist. Lord Ormsby was in general a temperate as well as a good horseman, but upon this occasion, perhaps from irritation at being unwillingly detained on the spot where he had parted from Matilda, he corrected the animal with unnecessary severity, and then having carried his point, as capriciously caressed him; saying "Poor Orlando! you and I must now turn our thoughts another way."

Putting into execution this plan, of disciplining his own and Orlando's wayward inclinations, and wandering farther away from home, and into a part of the Delaval property with which he was not very well acquainted, he began to be rather doubtful of the road, when he saw approaching him his old acquaintance, Dick Boulby, whom he had known as Lord Wakefield's gamekeeper. Dick was passing him without notice, when Lord Ormsby stopped him, "What, Dick, don't you know me again?" After looking at him a moment, Dick exclaimed, "Why, if it beant Measter Agoostus Arlingford, why I be hanged if I warn't speering about you at that very moment.—You'll excuse my not knowing you again, Sir. I'm a bit over old to ken folks. Bad times sin' we met, my Lord you be now—"

"Yes, but the times are getting better."—"Worse wid me—they canna get better—*You* might have made them better, and that were what I was a bethinking me about, when first I seed you. You were the best lang shot I ever met in all my days; but this baronet, he dinna ken the trigger fra the cock, or may be whether shot came fra stock or muzzle."

"Well," said Lord Ormsby, anxious to turn

the conversation, "he may be a very good master for all that. But I had almost lost my way: you can tell me the best road back to Ormsby; these lanes are rather crooked."—"Crooked! they be strait enuf presently. That Sir James he be going—(think o' that, Measter Arlingford!) to make a road through Delaval Park, strait as any line in his father's ledger!—aye, and as black too.—A rail-road to carry coal, think of that.—What wou'd my lady's grandfather, auld lord, as I used to follow when he rode hawking through whole range, have said when he went star-gazing, to have com'd wid his nose int' coal-cart?"

"But, I dare say it isn't so," said Lord Ormsby, "it's a false report."

"Over true," said Dick, "it were but yesterday I was at our best wood—that you know, where Mr. Scribbleton, my lord's secretary, peppered your legs in the Battew. Well, I seed three chaps I did not ken, with poles and other sort of machines, I guessed might be new fangled poaching tools; so I went ti'd them, and they told I, they wair surveyors—come down fra Sir James to take elevation for line of rail-road.—They say, howsomdever, they mun wait for

Parliament, and they canna do it without my lady's word; and she, Lord bless her! is auld lord's own grand-daughter; she did a power of good last winter. I'll hear it fra her own lips before I believe—Oh, Mr. Augoostus, she might have had power as well as will to help, but for this chap,—one canna make a silk purse out a sow's ear, as my auld woman says; but if you had"——Lord Ormsby did not wish this comparison to be pushed further, or indeed the appearance of interfering in Sir James's concerns; so, having learnt the best road from his old friend, he gave him something to remember him by, and gallopped home: and there for the present we must leave him.

CHAPTER VI.

The 16th of July, the day appointed for the departure of the Dorntons for the Continent, at length arrived. The intermediate time, since we left them, had been employed by Sir James in overloading himself with cumbrous comforts of every description, mostly patent portable articles—that is to say, they were just portable enough to stuff the carriages full of things otherwise unnecessary. And being ingenious patent contrivances, they had the peculiar recommendation for travelling, that they could only be repaired by the inventor. However, by dint of a great deal of packing, they were at length all stowed; and Sir James and Lady Matilda took their places in the travelling chaise, and Mam'selle Felicie and her band-boxes in the Britchker behind.

Partial as I am to Lady Matilda, and anxious that the gentle reader should pass as much of his time as possible in her company, I still do not

think it would be shewing her to advantage if I were to induce him to travel bodkin between her and Sir James. I shall therefore rather propose to him, at least at starting, to take a place in the family-coach of the Hobsons, which, as stated in all the newspapers, left the Waterloo Hotel in Jermyn Street, two days previous to the last-mentioned departure.

We must, however, first introduce some of the male members of the family, who have not yet been mentioned. Mr. Hobson, himself, was usually called Old Hobson. Not that he really was older than many very personable people in the world; but his coat had a long waist and a short collar, he abominated trowsers, always wore long gaiters, never shewed his shirt collar, and his wig was the meanest of scratches. Besides this, he never laughed, and seldom spoke; and when he did, always in a short testy manner. These marks of age, more infallibly than any number of years, constitute a man old in the nineteenth century.

People wondered why old Hobson was not a pleasanter old fellow. Every thing had gone well with him in the world; but the fact was, that the situation into which his success had brought him, produced that constant contradic-

tion between his actions and his inclinations, which caused his surliness. Conscious that he had made his own fortune, he was anxious to shew the extent of his merit to the world, by spending it with spirit; and this desire was in a state of perpetual warfare with that penurious turn which had helped him to acquire his wealth.

This inward struggle was most apparent in trifles, as reminding him most forcibly of the little expenses he used to grudge in his hoarding days. He would at any time rather pay a coach-maker, than a postboy. On great occasions, too,—such as the tour abroad,—his anxiety to do the genteel thing laid him at the mercy of his family.—His dislike to the journey only vented itself in grumbling.—He never ventured to offer direct objection, much less formal opposition; but, as it was inevitable, comforted himself with doing his best to make it disagreeable.

Such was the amiable being who now took his seat in his new travelling-coach, with his wife by his side, and three daughters opposite to them. In the rumble behind, were squeezed those two most hapless animals when abroad, a London footman and an English maid; the latter of whom, as she complained herself, "*did* for all the ladies."

The barouche-seat in front was occupied by two much more important personages; no other than our friend Jem's two elder brothers. The eldest, Tom, was what is called "in business;" that is, he spent all his time in amusing himself, whether as a pedestrian in poaching, as an equestrian in tumbling off broken-down hack hunters, or in the vehicular line, in tooling the Manchester Mail the last stage into that town.—But though he was thus always occupied out of doors, in bringing down birds, throwing down horses, or driving down passengers, he was, nevertheless, all this while "in the house;" that is, his name did duty on many a bale of goods in large letters, —"Hobson, Rising, Hobson, & Co." while his person was following these more agreeable avocations.

It was with a view to settling Tom somewhere abroad, to increase the foreign connexions of the house, that his father consented to his accompanying them.

By his side sat a very different person,—his brother, Mr. Valentine Hobson; christened Valentine, from his having been born on the 14th of February, the anniversary of that sapient saint. And, as it turned out, he had been

appropriately enough named; for much of the mawkish nonsense, and sentimental stuff of his natal day, had instilled itself into his character. He was incurably addicted to scribbling amatory trash; which worst of all offences in old Hobson's eyes, had been attempted to be corrected by procuring him chambers in Lincoln's Inn, to study the law. But the remedy, strong as it may seem, had not been effectual; for he had never even then had a lucid interval, in which he enjoyed a temporary oblivion that "love," rhymed to "dove;" "thine," to "pine;" "eye," to "die;" and that "heart," with a due sense of its own importance, monopolized "dart," "smart," "part," *cum multis aliis*. This seemed desperate indeed; but a fortnight at Paris having been known to effect wonderful cures in sentimental cases, he was now on his way to try that specific, and was going with his family as far as Calais. With his mother he was a great favourite, as she declared she liked a man who knew all *Bell's Letters* by heart.

This was the family arrangement, and thus they had all taken their places,—the hapless Jem winking his red eyes at the hotel door.

"Good bye, Jem," said Miss Hobson.

"Good bye, Jem," echoed Miss Anne.

"Remember me to Miss Jones," said one.

"And me to Miss Donking," said another.

"And all of us to Bill Buckley," said a third.

"Learn your multiplication table better, boy," growled old Hobson; and that was all the farewell the kind father took of him.

"And stick to speechifying, and you'll be a great man," sobbed Mrs. Hobson, in a tone in which present distress struggled with feelings of confident anticipation.

Poor Jem! at that moment he would have given up the prospect of all his mother's ambitious plans for him at home—even the Home Secretaryship—for the smallest place in the foreign department, that he now saw before his eyes.

At length the word was given, and the immense vehicle put in motion, not without much difficulty, and scraping, and scrambling, and after two or three abortive jerks; though the horses were four of Newman's best.

Hardly was this effected, when "Stop! stop!" cried Mrs. Hobson; "You must stop."

"Aye, stop, stop here for good," said old Hobson; "better late than never."

" No nonsense, my dear," retorted Mrs. Hobson; " but I have left behind, what I shall be dumb-founded without. Madame (what's her name's) *Voyager's Manual Exercise.*"

" Voyager exercise, you'll have enough of that in the voyage in the packet to-morrow," muttered her husband.

But this was lost on Mrs. Hobson, who had now pushed as much of her person as she could through the open window, screaming " Jem." Jem, who thought that of course they had stopped for him, came grinning up, and was marvellously disappointed, when he was only sent back for a book. With such a messenger at such a time it needed hardly be added, that the book was returned missing; and the carriage was again, with the same efforts, put in motion. But once started, there is no known weight that ever swung upon four wheels, which four English post horses will not take at the rate of ten miles an hour, provided always that the boys have the necessary spur in the head, and these silver persuaders were upon this occasion unsparingly used by Tom Hobson.

By dint of this, as they reached Blackheath, they overtook a Dover Safety Coach,—called

safety, originally, probably from going faster, and carrying more passengers than was previously believed possible; and certainly having since earned the title, by being oftener overturned than any other.—" Blow me," said Tom to his brother, " if that an't our *currier*." Then tapping the front window, " I say, there's our *currier*."—" Where's the *cooreer?*" said Mrs. Hobson.—" Let's look at the *curiare*," said Miss Hobson, as she thought with her best boarding-school accent. " I haven't seen the *quooria*," added Miss Anne. " Damn the *currier*," said old Hobson.—" That's our *curry*," was echoed from John to Nanny on the rumble.

" What a miserable half-begotten looking beggar he is," said Tom to his brother, from the front. " He seems a helpless sort of chap," continued John from the rear. " Quite a poor *cretur*," rejoined Nanny; and to be sure he did not look very happy and comfortable, bumping about in the seat of the basket, his little legs dangling in the air, and his short person elbowed into nothing by two fat old women, who talked unremittingly across him to each other, reckoning the *forinneering man* for nothing. The boys having gallopped by the coach to Tom's heart's content,—they

arrived at Dartford,—where the expectations Tom had excited in the boys, were to be realized by old Hobson. This was rather a dilemma for Tom; for his father, when what he had given was received with a remonstrating touch of the hat, and, "Please your honour, we came a merry pace," retorted, "Merry pace? racing, you rascals; think yourself very well off I don't set old Martin after you." But, Sir, the young gentleman—" the boy was rejoining, when Tom, tipping him a wink, made up deficiencies amply out of his own purse; and Lunnon Bill bowing, and having said something in a satisfactory whisper to Dartford Dick, they again galloped off, before the coach, the object of all Tom's anxieties, came in sight. Without farther adventure they arrived at Dover, where they spent their last English evening in a truly national manner,—eating and drinking, without intermission, during a continued succession of dinner, tea, and supper; the intellectual part of the entertainment consisting in Tom Hobson's having the courier in to laugh at his broken English.

The next morning, betimes, they were summoned to the Steam Packet,—where the ladies immediately descended to the cabin, "to prepare

for woe;" while old Hobson was unmercifully beset by that licensed tribe of extortioners, consisting of boat-men, ladder-men, custom-house runners, ostlers, porters, and a long *et cetera*.—"Ah! I knew, if I left England, I should pay for it," he said; "but this is beginning rather soon;" all the time fumbling the loose change in his breeches-pocket, the complete disappearance of which he would have thought utter ruin, though now going where it would be perfectly useless—he sneaked off in time, into some undiscovered hole, from which he was not extracted till they arrived at Calais.

And now, that deafening clamour, and bewildering bustle, with which sailors give to their ordinary duties the same importance as if the vessel were going to the bottom, were silenced; the all-powerful voice of the Captain summoned, from the cauldron beneath, a spirit, who rose half through the hatchway, like a devil in a pantomime through a trap. The word was given; and the steam-boat began tickling old Neptune's sides with its claws. Part of the boards that covered one of the wheels being open, Tom Hobson took his post there; and being, as we have already seen, a great amateur of rapidity in

rotatory motion, was highly pleased with its exertions, and kept crying—"Bravo! go it, my tulip! spin along, my fine fellow! bravo!" till the whirl of the wheel communicated itself to his head; and the sea acting equally upon both, he was soon incapacitated for further observations.

Against the other paddle, in a pensive attitude, leant his brother Valentine, who having, amongst his other studies, read an English translation of Corinne, thought it necessary, like Lord Neville, to take a pathetic farewell of the white cliffs of Albion; which tender feeling, as he was only going for a fortnight to Paris, his mother country, however partial a parent, could hardly be supposed to reciprocate with any one of his numerous family. However, there he stood, leaning his fat face on his pudsy hand, and trying in vain for a rhime to cliff,—"whiff" and "stiff" being both unmanageable. At last his head was turned before his couplet,—and his patriotic sickness yielded to one of a less sentimental description—his *mal-du-pays* being succeeded by the *mal-de-la*-mer.

Such was the disabled condition of the Hobson family, when their passage was concluded, (as is always the case,) in less time than it was ever

done before, though in half an hour longer than they were told was expected, at starting. They now entered Calais harbour, and prepared to expose themselves to the gaze of the crowd assembled to criticise the last importations from the island of beauty.

Nationality is a sort of generous illiberality, a dignified selfishness, the indulgence of which, so far from exciting self-reproach, one easily persuades oneself is praise-worthy, as well as pleasing. The consciousness of monopolizing, within our sea-girt isle, a proud pre-eminence of beauty, is one of its most gratifying illusions.

Yet I own, that in returning along the Dover road, I have been sometimes a little puzzled in my attempts to be struck with this, as, in passing, I have endeavoured to persuade myself, that a slouching gait, high round shoulders, thick waist, and thicker ancles, must belong to a lovely face; and leaning forward to convince myself, the slight glimpse has not quite realized the expectations national vanity had formed.

If such disappointment has sometimes been my fate, in spite of all my prejudices, of which I am proud, what must a Frenchman, whose prejudices are certainly the other way, think (when

he thinks at all) of the boasted beauties whom he daily sees scrambling and shuffling to their inn, with all the disadvantage of just recovering from that most unbecoming of maladies, of which a packet is the cause?—their complexion (which is always their first attraction,) completely discoloured; their dress, (which is never their forte,) splashed and draggled; displaying, in short, all the disfigurement, and none of the interest, of recent distress. Though Venus did first come from the sea, assuredly she never landed from a packet.

We have, however, sent more favourable specimens than the present representatives of an English Venus, and her three attendant graces; who, in the persons of Mrs. and the Misses Hobson, with old Hobson, like Vulcan hobbling after, excited no small merriment, as they made the best of their way to Dessein's Hotel.

CHAPTER VII.

The feeling which one experiences in the first change from an English to a French inn, must be like that of a horse, who is suddenly taken out of a warm, close stable, and turned into a loose box. In the first, he is often cramped for room; kept much too hot; plagued with superfluous care and attention; never left enough to himself; and stuffed beyond what he can eat. In the other, he has a fine, roomy, airy place, to walk about in, and nobody ever seems to trouble his head about him, or to come near him, except at random, to feed him, when they have nothing else to do.

At any rate, if the comparison be not quite just, it is one which struck Tom Hobson, as he and his family were turned into a large, staring, out-of-the-way kind of room, and left to their fate. Minutes, that seemed hours, passed, and there was no appearance of any one taking the least notice of them. Mrs. Hobson, on whom

the discipline of the packet had entailed a most ravenous appetite, now became most clamorous. All in vain;—at last she heard a footstep on the stairs, and sallied forth. There she caught a stray waiter, singing—"*Partant pour la Syrie.*" He was proceeding on his way, without attending to her, when hunger made her bold; and though she had lost her "*Manuel de Voyager,*" she screamed at him, as she thought, in the words of that useful publication,—"*Je suis* femme, *il faut me manger.*" The *garçon* stared a moment, in astonishment; when the truism contained in the first part of the sentence, not seeming to reconcile him to the obligation implied in the remainder,—he passed on—"*Partant pour la Syrie.*" Their case thus seemed quite desperate; when first an authoritative voice was heard upon the stairs, abusing every body to the right and left; of which the most audible words were, —"*Sacre! de faire attendre; Sacre! Milord Hobson;—une des plus riches familles d'Angleterre;—Sacre!*"—and, to their astonishment, there appeared the figure of the much despised courier, *sacreing* into the room the identical *garçon.* Leon's altered appearance, in "Rule a Wife and have a Wife," did not create greater,

surprise, nor, indeed, a more complete change in manner and deportment; nor was it easy to recognise the little, helpless, much-enduring being, in the shabby surtout and oil-skin hat, in the arbitrary, bullying, swaggering hero, glittering in gold lace and scarlet, with shining yellow leather breeches, and clattering about in a commanding pair of boots. It was like the Emperor Napoléon, rising from a sous-lieutenant of artillery, upon the extinction of the *ancien régime*, into absolute power.

Thus, after the short-lived anarchy of the steam-boat, Pierre had completely superseded all the former legitimate authorities of the Hobson family. From that time forward, nothing could be done without him; all Mrs. Hobson's almost unintelligible wants were obliged to receive his sanction, before they could be satisfied;—old Hobson's *eau-de-vie* and water could not be obtained without his approbation;—Tom was obliged to resign, into his more efficient command, all future controul over the postillions;—even the young ladies could not lay their heads on a downy pillow, unless it was procured by him; and when Miss Hobson desired that she might have *deux gros matelots* on her bed, he it was

that saved her from the danger to which an unconscious substitution of one vowel for another, might have otherwise subjected her. The dinner was not only obtained at once by the exertion of his authority, but upon the whole gave astonishing satisfaction. True it is, that old Hobson began by d——g the soup, as mere salt-water, with sea-weed floating in it; by which he succeeded, as usual, in making what, from recent recollections, was to all the party precisely the most unwelcome of similies. Some *Maintenon cotelettes*, too, excited much admiration; Mrs. Hobson wondering why they were wrapped up in paper; and Tom, supposing that they were meant for them to carry in their pockets, instead of sandwiches.

Dinner being finished, and the rain continuing, the party were again reduced to their internal resources for amusement; and as the detail of these is not likely to afford much gratification to my readers, I shall leave them, for the present, to pursue their journey, turning my attention to more important personages.

CHAPTER VIII.

Sir James and Lady Matilda Dornton were left just about to start on a continental tour, and just about to become, for the first time since their marriage, entirely dependent on each other for society.

La Bruyere says, "*Le commencement et le declin de l'amour se font sentir également par l'embarras où l'on est de se trouver seuls.*" This is particularly applicable to those whose connexions are dependent, for their continuance, entirely on the will and pleasure of the heart, whose only link is love. But those whom worldly views have united "for better and for worse," and who have made the state of the affections an after-thought, are apt to find, in the embarrassment of a continual *tête-à-tête,* no slight hints of the above kind, but a very disagreeable conviction impressed upon them; namely, the confirmed negative of love, or the impossibility of loving.

This unpleasant discovery is, in well-regulated families, almost indefinitely postponed.—Besides the perpetual bustle of the London season, which is always effectual; even in a country-house, the dreaded dependence on each other may, for some time, be palliated either by an idle sporting brother or two, an unmarried sister, who hangs a little on hand, a led captain, a fed chaplain, or a nameless dependent of some kind or other. But travelling is a desperate case; a daily *tête-à-tête*, side by side in a close carriage, is a powerful dispeller of all doubts or illusions on the subject of likes and dislikes. How many early friendships which have withstood the caprice and rivalry of school or college, has a tour through Europe dissolved! The perpetual change of every thing else, varying climates, postillions with the different-coloured jackets of every state, new towns daily rising in the distance, arrived at, seen, and left behind again;—all this gives a preternatural sameness to the eternal presence of one's post-chaise companion, which makes one feel at length, as Sinbad did towards the old man of the sea.

How much worse was the situation of our heroine, whose travelling experience only con-

firmed her former fears, as to the state of her feelings towards him, from whom the end of the journey was to bring no separation!

Lady Matilda had been gifted with extraordinary quickness of feeling, but with an almost imperturbable sweetness of temper united with it. The first was sensibly wounded, at finding with how perfectly unintellectual a companion she was paired;—the latter was not a little tried with perpetual ebullitions of vulgar selfishness, which, somehow unaccountably, the atmosphere of a carriage, in travelling, seems singularly calculated to bring out and display.

The day they landed in France, they had attempted to reach St. Omer, and were not a little annoyed, upon arriving there, at finding the gates were shut. This is, no doubt, a highly praiseworthy precaution in the legitimate authorities of a great empire; but, to the uninitiated, it does seem a little doubtful, whether, in a time of profound peace, a Limonière, or even a Berline en Poste, could overturn the government, or even take the town, though they should not arrive at the gates till a little after eight in the evening. Remonstrance and entreaty were, however, alike in vain, and Sir James and Lady

Matilda were reduced to the necessity of passing the night in a wretched cabaret in the suburbs, where, but for the darkness, they would have seen it boasted on a board, that extended over the whole front, "*Ici on loge à pied et à cheval.*"

Here Matilda, jaded and dispirited, found herself in a long narrow strip of a room, whose two sides were equally divided between windows, against whose ill-closed casements the rain never ceased to patter, and doors which obstinately refused to shut, though most severely slammed at each entrance of the sabot-footed attendants. She threw herself into a little stiff-backed chair, and leaning on a ricketty table, her eye fixed upon two newly-laid logs of green wood, which shewed more affinity to water than fire, by simmering and weeping, instead of crackling and blazing; the only symptom of ignition being smoke, which in a body deserted the chimney for the room. Her attention was called for a moment to Sir James, who stood there, his usually vacant countenance only marked by that owlet look, which a sleepy traveller exhibits on first facing the light; and his discordant voice not softened to comfort her, but raised to abuse the negligence of the servants, who, by mislay-

ing his segars, had prevented him from adding that delight to her situation. With such a companion, in such a scene, Matilda felt that though the luxuries and comforts of life do not, in themselves, constitute happiness, their utter absence to those who are accustomed to both, can very much aggravate misery.

If in those marriages, of which there are so many, where mutual attachment is to be the effect, and not the cause of the connexion, men did but feel the necessity of bestowing, at least as much care in concealing for a time, faults of manner and of temper, as their vanity will still induce them to take, in hiding, if possible, defects of person; if they were not so very hasty in stripping their character of those borrowed ornaments and artificial advantages, which it wore as that of a lover,—they would not then lose the opportunity, never to be recovered, of fixing affections, which, if not theirs already, must at that time be powerfully predisposed in their favour; for whilst the feelings newly kindled at the altar are yet warm, and the inclinations malleable, an impression that lasts for life is easily stamped; but a repulsive chill then given to the heart, it remains cold and insensible ever after.

I do not mean to state, that any temporary management could have rendered happy the union of two persons so perfectly unsuited to each other as Sir James and Lady Matilda. Vulgarity was so strongly marked in his manners, and selfishness so thoroughly ingrained in his character, that constant intercourse with him would have been scarcely endurable by any one with much less than Matilda's refined delicacy of taste, and even more than her natural sweetness of temper.

Yet was Sir James what is called in the world "A good sort of man." No very high praise either, as it is a name which, in its very essence, implies the utter absence of the agreeable;—a character alike remote from the possession of those minor talents which constitute the charm of every-day society, or the endowment of those higher qualities which excite extraordinary admiration. A good sort of man is a man in easy circumstances, who has therefore never been convicted of dishonesty; of phlegmatic temper,—who has therefore never been guilty of any violent outrage;—of mean abilities,—who has therefore never either in private wittily satirized his neighbour, or in public disturbed his country by his political ambition. A strange misnomer, a good

sort of man. He may be a good man; he certainly never has proved himself a bad one; but as to being a good sort, specimen, or sample of a man, heaven defend us from a world peopled after such a pattern!

For six long days, through detestable roads, did Matilda swing side by side with Sir James, who, when he had nodded himself out of an uneasy nap, was generally occupied either in fidgetting for his snuff-box, or grumbling at the profusion of packages with which he had himself loaded the carriage. Their road the while lay through three hundred miles of unparalleled ugliness, even in that most uninteresting country, self-styled "*La belle France.*"

"*La belle France*" has no more pretensions to beauty, than the majority of her daughters. Like many of them, she has not a single good feature in her face; but unlike them, she does not even do her best by adventitious aid to deserve the title she arrogantly assumes. The slovenly mother of a smart family, she shews herself boldly in all her unadorned ugliness; her whole form wrapt in one shapeless, unvaried yellow gown every summer, which is changed for

her old brown suit all the winter. England, on the other hand, though her daughters are proverbially dowdy, is a very coquettish elderly gentlewoman. Not a defect but is carefully concealed—not the smallest beauty, but is made the most of—decked out in every variety of colouring,—verdure of the softest velvet, shaped in fashion's newest fancy, and flounced and furbelowed with woods and plantations, trimmed in the best taste of Mesdames Flora, Pomona, & Co.

For six long days, as Matilda journeyed on through endless avenues and boundless plains, "If," thought she, "my way through life is to be like this, unvaried and uninteresting; and, like this, straitened by such irksome marks of limitation, may the objects around hold out no stronger allurements than the sameness of the present prospect, to tempt a departure from the strict line of duty."

Their route latterly had been rolling up and down in a smooth shapeless undulation, which, like a ground-swell at sea, though tame in itself, often betokens the neighbourhood of bolder breaks in the surface. In fact, the ridges had gradually become sharper and steeper; and the majestic

Alps in the distance had already begun to peep above their cloudy screen, at the pigmy intruders who were arriving at their outer gates.

The scenery about Moray, a little village at the foot of the Jura, is picturesque if not grand, and forms at least an appropriate outwork at this approach to Nature's stupendous pile.

As the Dorntons descended the last pitch down to that village, which was to be their resting place for the night, Matilda beheld, for the first time in her life, real mountains; as we can hardly dignify with that title any of those round punchy protuberances which we have in England. She was enthusiastic in her admiration, whilst Sir James only remarked that it was "devilish steep and dangerous."

As it was yet early to stop, though too late to cross the Jura that night, she was anticipating with the first sensation of pleasure she had experienced for some days, a solitary ramble with her pencil, leaving Sir James to superintend the preparations for dinner, and amuse himself with his segars,—when, as they drove up to the inn door, half a dozen voices which Matilda too well recollected, though habit had not yet rendered them familiar to her, exclaimed at once, "Law!

it's my uncle and aunt,—How d'ye do, uncle? How d'ye do, Lady Matilda? How d'ye do, brother Jem?" "Only think, our dickey-spring broke, and Tom has cut his face; and the stupid blacksmith has made it much worse than it was before (that's the dickey); and Betsy has sprained her ancle; and Pa says that though it did look so thick, (that is the iron spring,) it was all good for nothing within."

This clear explanation of their calamity accounted for their being still detained here, but did not reconcile to Matilda the necessity which it entailed of her abandoning her solitary ramble. Sir James, she knew, was the more jealous of any inattention, on her part, towards his family, as he was himself rather more ashamed of them than he would ever allow her to be of any thing of or belonging to him. It was also a tender subject with him, because once, when Matilda's intimate friend, Mrs. Mechlin, had been criticizing the dowdy appearance of the Hobson's, and wondering why they went abroad, our heroine had, in a thoughtless moment, said, that, judging from their dress and address, she should think they were *bag*-women travelling with samples of Manchester fashions and manners.

It is probable, that if she had thought one moment before she spoke, her fancy would have suggested something better:—it is certain, that if she had paused at all, she would have been altogether silent on so delicate a subject. However, her friend had repeated it heedlessly to Sir James, as an excellent thing, and it had given prodigious offence. Sir James's own manner towards the Hobsons varied much, as it was alternately governed by a desire to impress them with respect for him, or other people with respect for them.

Of all sorts of pride, purse-pride, or the pride of purse (if one must not *coin* a word, even for one's purse), has the most influence upon every-day deportment. The object of all pride is, to make those around feel their inferiority; to effect which, the purse-proud man is, more than any other, reduced to *vivâ voce* assertions in society. Pride of family may silently vent itself in its sixteen quarterings on the pannel of a carriage; or, it may lie quietly on one's table, in a Debrett's Peerage, with a back like a young tumbler's, broken just enough to shew with ease what is required of it. Or, if it is rather the

pride of recent rank than antiquity of descent, it is amply gratified by the direction on the back of a letter, or a brass plate on a front door.

But the pride of purse is of a much more restless, obtrusive disposition; it cannot satisfy itself with the possession of the outward advantages of wealth, for those are shared by the constant succession of needy spendthrifts, who, each in the course of his ephemeral existence, make as much outward shew. It is only, therefore, by an ostentatious and over-bearing manner in society, that the purse-proud man can succeed in his object of making himself disagreeable wherever he goes

There is, however, another distinguishing trait in this description of pride, that, amongst its professors there is much more subordination than in any other. A man who is proud of his family, will find some very sufficient reason why he is quite as good as another, who, nevertheless, numbers several more quarterings; but the wealthy man's pride depends so entirely upon calculation, —is so completely a matter of figures,—that the man of ten thousand a-year, however bullying to the man of two, would no more dispute about

giving way to the man of fifty thousand, than he would think of denying the balance between the two sums, if he saw them upon paper.

This it was that made old Hobson have so high a respect for Sir James. He was proud of his own exertions in having realized a good lump of money in a common way; but he looked upon Sir James's enormous fortune with admiration; as a monstrous fungus, which old Smithson had raised to a preternatural size, in the hot-bed of corruption. Strong as this feeling was, it seldom softened his manner so far as to shew what Sir James thought the proper degree of respect; but, upon the present occasion, as the Dorntons entered, old Hobson forgot Sir James altogether. He had never seen Matilda before, and so true it is, that transcendent beauty will sometimes make an impression upon, apparently, the most impenetrable stuff, that, for a moment, his crabbed countenance relaxed into something approaching towards admiration, of which a parallel instance was never recollected, even by Mrs. Hobson, in her best days; and, rising from his chair, he involuntarily muttered—"superfine!"

It was soon arranged between the gentlemen, that as the inn boasted but one saloon, they should

all dine together in it. This being settled, Lady Matilda retired to her own room, merely to escape for a moment from the family party, but under pretence of preparing for dinner. This excuse being taken literally by the Misses Hobson, they determined to do likewise; and summoning the unhappy Nancy, they all three put her services in requisition to make them smart for Aunt Matilda.

Miss Hobson having, upon further inspection of the damage done, been found not near so much disabled as the carriage, acted as *fuglewoman* for the other sisters to dress by; so that, by the time Lady Matilda returned to the saloon, by one door, still in the same pretty Parisian redingote, her bonnet only exchanged for the most becoming, because the most unpretending of caps, the three sisters entered at the other, all in low-gowns, with satin petticoats, short sleeves, pink sashes, and white shoes.

Closely following his sisters, came our friend Tom, his face not improved by sundry black patches, the consequence of his fall; but his neck, about which he seemed much more occupied, shining in the unsullied purity of his best starched cloth. Once before had he seen Lady

Matilda, when he called to pay his respects in London: but his introduction was not an auspicious one; for her Ladyship's groom of the chambers, who was a man of discrimination, having introduced him as—"The young man from Hamlet's, my Lady;"—she saluted him with—"Haven't you brought your little bill with you?"—To which he replied—"Little Jem, you mean, my Lady; my brother Jem."

When they were seated, Mrs. Hobson began:—"Well, I'm sure it's all very pleasant travelling, to see people who can talk French so fast; and then the roads all paved and strait, like streets without houses; whilst there they're making all Lunnon like a turnpike road, with buildings. I'm sure, Mr. Grumbleton told Hobson, he did'nt know his counting-house in Bishopsgate from his country-house at Hackney, now they were both equally muddy and dusty.—I'm sure you must like foreign parts, Lady Matilda."

"I am not," replied Matilda, "particularly fond of roads which follow the crow in his flight; nor has the chaise-window shewn me much to admire in passing through France: but I have been very much pleased with all I have seen to-

day—without compliment," she added, smiling, and rather amused at the unintentional flattery which her speech might be supposed to convey. "Well, I admire all I have seen of foreign parts," retorted Mrs. Hobson."—"Yes," grumbled old Hobson, "and the more you admire them, the more they laugh at you; you'd better have staid at home; it's all very well for my Lady there, who can shew herself against any thing they can shew her."

All the Hobson family were in mute astonishment at the phenomenon of any thing so like a civil speech coming out of the mouth of its head; though, perhaps, after all, it was only said to give additional bitterness to his attack upon his wife. She, however, seemed quite invulnerable, as she continued,—"Well, never trouble your head about all that, but send me some more soup, my dear."—"Here," addressing the *fille* who was waiting,—"What is the girl staring at?—*Ici*,—what d'ye call her?—*Garçon*, *prenez mon* plat."—The charge of staring was certainly well founded against *la fille*, for she could not take her eyes off the profuse display of white necks and red elbows, on the part of the Miss Hobsons, of which she had never before seen the like;

and, with that nice observation of manners and appearance with which French women of every rank are always endued, she was puzzled beyond measure, to account for the three "*horreurs*" being seated at the same table with a person like Lady Matilda, whom one glance told her to be "*mise à merveille.* That the mere accident of travelling at the same time should have produced this union among English people, all her former experience told her was very unlikely, as she had often known, when two solitary Englishmen had arrived separately, that the last comer would wait, starving for want of his supper, in his bedroom, till the other had left the saloon, rather than sit down in the room with a man he did not know.

The *soubrette*'s speculations were, however, interrupted, by Sir James sending her to his courier for his English comforts, in a canteen as big as the trunk in which Iachimo hides himself. Cocoa paste, essence of coffee, &c. were not very serviceable at dinner, but some Harvey's sauce was hailed with great glee; though, as there was no fish, there arose some difficulty whether to apply it to *fricandeau*, *fricassé*, *pâté mêlée*, or *poulet rôti*.

The sight of all these English comforts, however, gave a new turn to Mrs. Hobson's feelings about the comparative merits of the two countries. Her opinions were always as lightly formed as they were loosely expressed; and so that she was but allowed to talk, she could be, alternately, equally voluble on both sides of any question.

"Well, after all, there is nothing like Old England—where things are good, if they're dear; and there is great cheating in all their cheapness here.—What d'ye think? t'other night, when we were at that town (what's it's name?) where they all fought for ten years about one naughty lady (more shame for them!)" "Do you mean *Troyes?*" said Lady Matilda, smiling: "Yes, *Troy*—aye—when we were at Troy, I *saw* how cheap Champaigne was—so, thinks I, one may have Port for next to nothing—so I sent for some to make some bishop for my good man there—who is as fond of it as mother's milk—aye, for all you look so, you are;—well, would you believe it? they charged more than ever I payed for claret at the Bridgewater Arms, when I wanted a bottle or two on some great occasion; now you see there was no reason in that at all.

To be sure, such things as they call wine here! they gave us a bottle the other night, they told us was wine, though their own name for it was Saint Cider, I believe." "Saint Péray, mamma," said Miss Hobson: "Ah—well—perry or cider, it's all one, and not so good as Herefordshire—neither."

As Mrs. Hobson was one of those persons who talk for talking sake, and precisely *because* they have nothing to say,—and as there is no reason whatever, in the nature of that kind of talk, why it should ever end spontaneously,—perhaps I had better put a forced stop to it at once, if it be only for the purpose of impressing my readers with a due sense of my moderation, in letting them off so easily, when I evidently have them at my mercy. Sparing them, therefore, for the present, any further *échantillons* of "Hobson's choice," I will only add, that our heroine retired early to her room, more than ever convinced, that no bodily exertions can be half so overpowering as those social efforts which labour to support the forced intercourse of uncongenial companions.

CHAPTER IX.

The next morning, Pierre announced that all the skill of the marischal had only succeeded in rendering the dickey perfectly unserviceable, and that it was now impossible that it could be mended short of Geneva. In this dilemma, the Dorntons could do no less than offer to take Miss Hobson with them, and let Tom share the Britchker with Ma'mselle Felicie. This arrangement, which gave general satisfaction to all the Hobson party, was proposed, by Lady Matilda, with that unaffected facility with which she always promoted any thing really good-natured, without considering its effect upon her own immediate comforts.

Tom was delighted at first with his new companion, having been already long enough abroad to think that there was a certain "*Je ne sais quoi*" about the appearance of Ma'mselle Felicie, which was a very good equivalent for beauty. Unfortunately however for him, the favourable

impression was not mutual. Tom was very much disfigured in his optics by his accident, and Felicie was not as much taken with his black eyes as he was with hers. Then, too, though she had been occasionally obliged to muffle her tongue in English whilst in that country, she had been very glad to get rid of the incumbrance; and upon starting for the Continent, she had determined to lay it all by till her return, with her own lumber, and her lady's old gowns. So that, at present, Tom's eyes and tongue being as unable as her's were unwilling to communicate, their intercourse was not likely to be very interesting. Besides all which, poor Tom completed his disgrace with his new companion, by unwarily stepping into one of her favourite band-boxes, just as they were about to start; on which she muttered something about "*gaucherie*;" which, without understanding it, his guilty foot told him was not flattering, and he became affronted in his turn; and from that moment their *tête-à-tête* was as perfectly matrimonial as Sir James's and Lady Matilda's had been before the intervention of Miss Betty Hobson.

The ascent of the Jura, never a very exhilirating business, seemed most particularly tedious

to all the different detachments of the party who were now crawling up it. But after leaving the highest post-house, upon a sudden turn of the road, there burst upon the bewildered gaze a prospect unparalleled in its rare union of the sublime and beautiful.

Far above rose, in the lonely pride of utter desolation, the wildest regions of eternal snow, whose pointed peaks seemed to pierce the firmament itself. Down in the depths below, as the morning vapours dispersed, were caught partial glimpses of the glassy lake, over whose unruffled surface many a light sail skimmed, in the full confidence of summer security; whilst the varied banks were enriched with all that could render delightful the scattered dwellings which imparted universal animation to the scene.

Matilda clasped her hands in an ecstasy of silent admiration. Even if she could have commanded ears which would have understood her feelings, words would have been wanting to express them.

Miss Hobson only exclaimed, "Law! what a way one can see, to be sure!"

Sir James, having with some difficulty edged himself to the front of the seat, deliberately

put down the side window, poked out his head, and turning his back at once upon the ladies and the landscape, gave his undivided attention to the arrangement of the drag-chain.

Pierre had remained with the Hobson coach to perform the same service; and seeing his master peeping out of the window, he called his attention to what he was accustomed to consider one of the lions of the route, "See one grand view, *Serr;* there are des montagnes, très affreux—de mountains ver much frightened—and là bas un pays très riant—a contrie which is ver laughable."

"Laughable," said old Hobson; "I'll tell you what—I shall think it no joke if I'm pitched to the bottom. So mind what you're at."

Even this, vociferated in no gentle tone, did not disturb his three female companions from the gentle slumber into which they had been rocked by the lengthened ascent.

If the reader will condescend to peep for a moment into the Britchker, which had been delayed at the last post for horses, there he will find Tom so delighted at the rapid pace with which, the carriage being light, the postillion tried to catch his comrades in the descent, that

he never once took his eyes off the bumping back before him.

Mam'selle Felicie, on her part, having caught a distant glimpse of the town of Geneva, without paying the least attention to her companion, began, perhaps a little prematurely, arranging her hair, settling her bonnet, and making sundry other little coquettish preparations for her anticipated arrival.

Nothing worthy of remark occurred to the travellers till they came within half a mile of Geneva; when Miss Hobson suddenly exclaimed, "What a funny carriage, with two ladies, who look like English, and yet they don't. The post-boys will run over them."

Matilda observed a charabanc, containing an elderly and a young lady, who, however great their general skill in coachmanship might be, had now their united attention occupied in a letter they were reading, and seemed, therefore, in some danger of the catastrophe hinted at by Miss Hobson; and, as the postillions pulled up to avoid this, our heroine caught a glance of the strangers, just as their embarrassment was removed, and recognised, in the younger lady, the happy, cheerful face of her early friend,

Emily Arlingford, which now beamed with more than its usual animation, as, almost immediately after the carriages had separated, she perceived Lady Matilda.

"Dear Emily," thought Matilda; "she is still the same, the same even in her affections for me." And losing herself in reflections on the past, blended with anticipations of future pleasure in her society, and finishing with a determination, in which pride had some share, that to her, at least, she would make the best of her present situation; she was hardly conscious when they stopped at the hotel, that they had entered the town of Geneva.

CHAPTER X.

The state of Geneva has often puzzled me. I have not understood why this pigmy republic was allowed an apotheosis, when the mighty spirits of Genoa, and of Venice, were laid for ever by the Holy men of Vienna. I was so dull as not to comprehend at first that it was a practical joke, on the part of those wicked wags, the confederated despots—that, like Fielding's burlesque upon heroics in "Tom Thumb," —Geneva was intentionally left to bring liberal institutions into disrepute, by holding itself up as an example of the consequential insignificance and petty policy of a free state.

I give the royal jokers credit for their trick, though I have at length found it out. It is no doubt indispensable that a republic, to command respect, should be large enough to be independent—that its interests should be of so dignified and extended a nature, as to induce its active servants to sink petty personal considera-

tions in their partnership in the common stock of glory and of power. To ensure a chance of this, it is necessary that the stake should be of a certain value;—for no one was ever heard to devote himself enthusiastically to the duties of a vestry meeting. The boundaries of the state, too, should be felt as a defence, not as a restraint. The sea, as being most closed against attacks from without, and open to enterprise from within, has most appropriately marked the limits of some of the mightiest modern republics—as Genoa, Venice, and Holland.

To one who has ever bestowed a thought upon these things, there certainly is something irresistibly comic in the spectacle of a pocket republic, squeezed down in the very centre of overgrown empires, situated in a little watch-making, tea-drinking town, on an inland lake, with a few sail of pleasure boats.

The poking one's nose against a microscope all the morning, and scratching away at a barely perceptible piece of mechanism, is, no doubt, not the best way to acquire enlarged views of political institutions; and gossiping every evening with half a dozen old women, over as many

cups of tea, is not the most perfect school for popular declamation. There is much in all this at which the muscles of the most rigid republican might involuntarily relax, though it is at the same time a topic of triumph to every Ultra in Europe, as they chuckle over it with undissembled contempt.

But the best joke does not always bear examination. How much of all this ridicule applies to the form of government itself; how much is caused merely by the petty limits within which it is confined? Would a tiny tyranny be more sublime if a real legitimate king were established as the main-spring in this watch-making town, ruling despotically over every hand, whether in the service of the minutes or the hours? There is not a Tory in England who has not quoted the famous answer of a gallant English aristocrat, who having, when a young man, been summoned before the Syndic for some offence, and desired to quit their territory in four-and-twenty hours, replied, "*Magnifiques Seigneurs, il ne me faut que trois minutes.*"

It does not seem to me that much of the point of this would have been lost, if it had been made

to a Prince of Pimlico, or a King of Petty France or of Little Britain, if there had been such persons, instead of a Syndic of Geneva.

But however this may be, there the conceited little republic is—set up by the Holy Alliance to be laughed at; and it does its best, certainly, to render itself a government at once unnecessarily meddling and frivolously offensive.—Not that I have any objection to the despots laughing at their own hoax, provided they do not carry the joke too far; which, however, I cannot but think they have done, when they call upon those whom they have at least nominally constituted free, to refuse an asylum to those who have been unsuccessfully struggling for real liberty. This, however, is too serious a branch of the subject to be lightly touched;—so let us join in the laugh at the Genevese,—comforting ourselves with the reflection, that we are not obliged to take from the patient automaton makers at Vienna their discredited specimen of a rival manufacture. We need not look alone where their fingers point; nor will the inquiring spirit of the age, in its search after those institutions best calculated to promote human happiness, be confined even to any quarter of the globe. If on the one

side of Europe we see, in the creeping paralysis and premature decrepitude of Asia, the certain effects of a long course of despotism, on the other we behold, as a political prodigy, the Herculean infancy of the free States in America. Civilization rose with the sun in the East, and as surely will it set in the West.

CHAPTER XI.

Their first breakfast in Geneva had not long been despatched, and Sir James had only just left Matilda alone, whilst he went to settle some *lionizing* for the day with his sister, who was in the same hotel, when an eager voice was heard in the anti-room,—" Never mind, I'm sure she'll see me"—and in one moment more Emily Arlingford rushed into the arms of her early friend. Lady Ormsby following, " I must have my turn too, though I cannot run so fast;—my legs are grown old and stiff—but my arms are not," said she, as she threw them round our heroine's neck.

Lady Ormsby had more than the mere remains of beauty. Indeed, time had marked her much more lightly than many a gay grandmother, who still enters the lists as a rival to her daughters' daughters, and plays off her veteran batteries against a third generation of lovers. But there are many things in which the world is ready to take us at our own valuation.

Lady Ormsby had evidently long abandoned all pretensions to beauty. Her dress, though never neglected, was never conspicuous. She would as soon have thought of flying as of flirting; and, therefore, she was only considered as a good-humoured, well-bred, cheerful chaperon. In truth, she had long ceased to wish to shine otherwise than with a borrowed light, or to excite any other admiration than that reflected back on her by the praises of her children. The greatest source of affliction to her, next to the death of her husband, had been the disgraceful life of her eldest son; but she regarded the present Lord Ormsby with a mingled pride and fondness which almost amounted to admiration. He, however, was an eccentric planet, that only occasionally crossed her path, to dazzle and delight. Her daughter Emily was the polar star, on which all her worldly hopes were fixed.

Never was a daughter more worthy to engross a mother's heart—never was that purest of earthly unions more perfect, cemented as it was by respect without restraint, and affection without blindness.

When a ready flow of pretty nothings had given vent to the first ebullitions of pleasure, felt

by long-divided friends at meeting again, Lady Ormsby said, "You must promise to come to us at our little villa on Thursday. I have not the pleasure of knowing Sir James; but I cannot allow myself to feel as a stranger to any one connected with you. Besides, we Anglo-continentals do not stand upon the same form as you have been accustomed to in London, where intimacy consists in writing little lying notes of excuse, beginning, 'Dear Lady so and so,' to every one of five hundred friends. We do not see people here through the same undistinguishing medium. Society abroad is like a telescope; it allows one to pick and choose one's objects, and bring those one likes as close as actual connection could do."

"Yes," said Emily, "and one has here no tiresome duties of acquaintanceship; one may present the small end of the glass when one pleases, and so make distant acquaintances still more distant, till those on the verge of the social horizon need no longer be distinguished."

Matilda, to whom this image of the glass had presented the pleasing, though fallacious, idea of excluding from the sight all those whose position was too close to be the subject of its influence,

added, "And even with the large end one's sight is confined to what one wishes to see."

"Then I'll have mine fixedly facing you, till I quite stare you out of countenance. I certainly had no glass at all yesterday," said Emily, "when I did my best to make you run over me; but we were just returning from the post-office, and how could I be attending to any thing else, when I was reading a letter from my"—She suddenly checked the animated tone in which she was speaking, and added, more quietly,—"from England." Her eye at the same time wandered unconsciously from her friend, and fixed itself upon a hat of Sir James's, which, well brushed, and with gloves dangling from the brim, was evidently domesticated on a small table opposite.

Matilda's eyes followed those of her friend, and this unwelcome memento of authorised intrusion, contrasting with former circumstances, seemed to give a temporary check to both their spirits; but Emily continued,—"I dare say you think me grown a terrible amazon, to manage a horse by myself, and drive mamma without masculine help."

"How should I think so," replied Matilda; "when you recollect the independent way in

which I used to ride over from Delaval to Ormsby?" She suppressed a sigh, as she recollected whose presence occasionally gave her confidence, and for whose offered accompaniment her casual fears had formed the best excuse.

Lady Ormsby, by way of turning the subject, said,—"I do not think that you will find many people you know here. The annual flight of birds of passage from the north, has not yet taken place; but your arrival tends more to mark the approach of the season, than ever one swallow did to make a summer. There are, by-the-bye, two new comers, whom you will meet at our house on Tuesday, Colonel Canteen and Mr. Tynte. You must have seen the Colonel; he is principally famous as living to eat, instead of eating to live: a very formidable character in my small establishment; nor, indeed, should I have ventured to ask him, if there had been any other *pied-à-terre* for him at present in the town. *Au reste*, he is every where, and knows every body; is a good creature, and, come when he may, nobody minds him."

"And, go when he will, nobody misses him, I suppose," said Lady Matilda; "for that generally follows from such a negative character."

His travelling companion, the Rev. Mr. Tynte, is much more of a character," said Emily. "You must have heard of him, as the great connoisseur and amateur painter. With him art is not second nature, but nature second art. The finest view would be to him uninteresting, unless it would make a good composition. I question whether he could not see, even you, without admiration, unless fortunately you reminded him of some famous Guido, or well-known Titian."

"One must at best, then," said Matilda, "expect to be rivalled in his good graces by the rich colouring of one's own gown."

"You will meet only one other person," continued Emily; "a great friend of ours; Count Santelmo, an unfortunate Italian refugee. You must get *his* character from mamma: you recollect of old her partiality for a *liberal*."

"We saw much of him," said Lady Ormsby, "at a time when family circumstances prevented our going out; and I trust, that our society has contributed to soften the melancholy loneliness of his situation. He is, in my opinion, a man who, had his destiny been cast as a native of England, or the member of any free state, would have filled Europe with his fame. But his way-

ward fate is united with that of luckless Italy; and here he is, a wandering exile, dependent, at present, upon the precarious protection of this little republic. After the manner in which Emily referred to me, you may think me, perhaps, partial, both personally and politically; but mine is not the age when praise is hyperbolical."

Matilda had not formed any such a conclusion from what had past; on the contrary, there is a sort of freemasonry amongst women, which enables them to detect one another's feelings, by signs imperceptible to us; and there was something in Emily's countenance, whilst Lady Ormsby was praising Count Santelmo, which made Matilda suspect that, at least in this instance, she had inherited her mother's partiality for a *liberal.* And this opinion was rather confirmed as Emily proceeded. "It's very odd, Matilda, and shews how likenesses may exist, independent of similarity of situation, local association, or family connexion;—but there is something in Count Santelmo, which puts me irresistibly in mind of you. There, now! that smile is so like him!—And, then, when he has been reading Alfieri aloud to us, there is something in the tone of his voice that has often

brought back the recollection of you, and your favourite, Shakspeare. To be sure, you never used to break out quite so loud as he does sometimes."

Matilda's comment upon this was interrupted by the return of Sir James, who was introduced, in due form, to Lady Ormsby and Miss Arlingford; and Matilda saw, with some dread, that he was preparing a speech, of which he was, in due time, delivered, consisting of an assurance of the pleasure Lady Matilda and himself had derived from Lord Ormsby's society in London.

Lady Ormsby and Emily both looked a little surprised at his declaration; and as Matilda felt that it must be conceived to imply rather more than the exchange of a few casual words, at an accidental meeting one day at dinner, she blushed a little, in spite of herself, as she added, in a hurried manner, though with an even tone,—"that they had *once* met Lord Ormsby at dinner at Lord Eatington's."

It was a trying moment for Matilda, when thus obliged, for the first time, to mention him with indifference, in the presence of those connexions who knew so well on how different a footing they had once been. But such is the

magic of a name, that the title of "Lord Ormsby" passed easily as that of a stranger from her lips, when Augustus, or even Mr. Arlingford, might have "stuck in her throat."

The subject was now immediately turned; and the conversation, under the influence of Sir James's presence, became common-place. They discovered, among other things, that "the Rhone was blue;" "the summer had been wet;" that "Geneva jewellery was cheap, but not good;" and, having discussed these knotty points, they separated, after Matilda's promise had been confirmed by Sir James, that they would dine at Lady Ormsby's villa, on the Thursday following.

CHAPTER XII.

On the day appointed for Lady Ormsby's dinner, the party, as proposed, assembled at the villa. Matilda was very much struck with the manner and appearance of the young Count Santelmo, though the presence of so many strangers, and the embarrassment of communicating in a foreign language, prevented him from taking much part in the general conversation.

Colonel Canteen, as will be expected from Lady Ormsby's account of him, did not waste his undivided attention on the intellectual part of the entertainment. But if he looked to the table for his *pièce de resistance*, he furnished between whiles little *entremêts* of gossip, with which he was always particularly well supplied. He handed round several newly-reported marriages for general discussion; informed Sir James, from the best authority, that there was at present no chance of a dissolution of parliament; and told Lady Ormsby that her son was returned

to town from Ormsby Castle,—of which indeed she was before aware.

Matilda the while was much amused with her neighbour, Mr. Tynte, whose eccentricities were those of a well-cultivated mind. She attacked him playfully for his preference of Art to Nature, and he defended his mania with much good humour, and with an enthusiasm half real, half assumed, which was highly entertaining.

" I am not obliged," he said, " to confine my admiration within the every-day limits of vulgar vision—to acknowledge that sunshine is bright, or green fields look fresh. A painter's eye can derive interest from the wrinkled features of an old burgomaster, or add dignity to a groupe of boosing boors. There is no utensil, however servile its purpose, which in our hands may not, through the charm of colouring, become the means of administering to the refined pleasures of taste. Now," added he, holding up a decanter of Bordeaux, " I should desire no better food for the pallette than this."

The Colonel, who from the other side of the table had caught part of this about taste, and, as he thought, *palate*, and who was himself agreeably surprised at widow's wine being so

good, interrupted him—" Good food for the palate—indeed, I think so—how highly coloured it is!"

" That is what I was admiring," said Tynte; " with some of these other bottles, what a good composition it would make."

" What!" in horror interrupted the Colonel. " Composition! why its great merit is, that it is genuine."

" My dear Colonel," retorted the other, " you have not now to learn that our *tastes* are different."

" No, indeed," said the Colonel, seeing his mistake, " I prefer a plain piece of varnished mahogany to the best painted pannel, and the maiden purity of a white cloth to the meretricious beauties of the highest coloured canvas."

" But," said Tynte, again addressing Matilda, " in this transitory life we ought to attach proper importance to the permanence of our pleasures. It would not be gallant to hint that the most perfect beauty will decay; but you will admit, that the most glorious sunset in nature soon ends in darkness; whilst *my* Claudes shine by lamplight, and glow even in winter. There is too high authority for my taste, in a country where

the sovereign has a gallery, instead of a seraglio, of beauties."

"I am convinced," said Matilda, "that to you the animation of Hermione's statue would have been a cruel disappointment, and

> "Would you not deem it breathed,
> And that those lips did verily bear blood?"

would have been uttered in despair."

The Colonel, who became a little impatient at this lengthened discussion of a subject not quite in his beat, and anxious to bring back the conversation within the more usual limits of dinner-table gossip, said to Lady Ormsby, "I think our friend Augustus was supposed at one time to have blended this taste for fine arts, and fine women, and to have been warmed, from his admiration of the cold marble, into a most fervent passion for the beautiful original. We thought, at one time, that La Venere Vincitrice had so far vanquished him, that he had forgotten England and all in it."

This was a subject which Lady Ormsby could never bear to hear mentioned with common patience, though she knew it all to be an invention; she therefore replied with more warmth than

was usual to her, " There never was the least foundation for that report. It was the most groundless piece of scandal that ever malice invented, or folly propagated. Poor Augustus! I knew, from his letters at that time, that he had forgotten nothing in England. It would have been better for him if he had."

As she uttered these last words, in a tone of strong feeling, her eyes involuntarily met Matilda's, and both mutually read, in the unconscious expression of that momentary glance, much that each would have wished to have concealed. Lady Ormsby was annoyed at having been betrayed into any thing that sounded the least like a reproach on her young friend—which, if it had been ever so well deserved, her good taste told her ought never to have been even hinted at by her. She did not, however, know then how to mend the matter; and the dinner having been concluded, she made the signal for leaving the table."

But what a new light seemed suddenly to break upon Matilda! Augustus Arlingford—the universally admired, all-conquering Augustus Arlingford, constant throughout to her, and suffering severely from her unaccountable fickle-

ness, was an image which had never before occurred to her as within the extremest verge of possibility; and yet all this seemed implied in Lady Ormsby's words, and still more confirmed by the confused and distressed expression of her countenance as their eyes met.

Her first sensations at the discovery, (which were all that a few minutes' stroll on the lawn gave leisure for,) were of a mingled nature, and there was much certainly that was soothing to her feelings; but yet she felt, that it was now more than ever incumbent on her, studiously to avoid his society.

Matilda's mind was occupied, during the drive homewards, with a pleasing retrospect of the social party they had just left.—Her's were not feelings of gratified vanity, for there had been no room for display,—but of satisfied self-esteem, arising from the calm consciousness, latterly rather unusual to her, that this was an intercourse with minds and manners congenial to her own. Perhaps I must own there was one little ingredient mixed up with her recollection of the party, which gave zest to the pleasure she had experienced, namely, the conviction which she had extracted from Lady Ormsby's words and looks,

that Augustus had never viewed her with indifference. In vain did she attempt to argue herself out of the pleasure she involuntarily derived from those words. "Ought I on any account to be rejoiced at such a discovery?" thought she; "my lot in life, if not quite of my own choice, is one for which I alone am responsible. If, too late, I feel impatient at the bondage into which I have sold myself; is it any consolation to know, that, but for my own act, all might now have been after my heart's first wish? If, in spite of myself, I sometimes give vent to fruitless repinings, ought I not to regret the knowledge that they are shared by one deserving a better fate?"

She endeavoured to persuade herself, that this reasoning of her calmer judgment had chastened her feelings on the subject, and she turned towards her companion Sir James, and tried, by redoubling her usual efforts, to conciliate and please, to induce him to think favourably of the coterie they had left.

But this was no easy task. Sir James was not at all disposed to be pleased with any of the party. The fact was, that he always felt most at home in any society where merit was estimated rather by length of purse than by length of head.

Now, none of those they had that day met were worshippers of golden idols. Mr. Tynte was much too high-flown to think of any thing so matter of fact as pounds, shillings, and pence;—to be sure, if a valuable collection of pictures had come to the hammer, he might then have envied Sir James his almost unlimited power of exchanging written paper for painted canvas; but as it was, he contented himself with pitying him as a Goth, without a particle of taste.

Colonel Canteen felt a respect only for that part of annual income which went in weekly expenditure, and would have valued a man rather upon his butcher's and baker's, than upon his banker's book.

Sir James had, indeed, made two or three attempts to shew himself off to his two hostesses, by leading the conversation to subjects of vulgar ostentation; but these endeavours had caused much suppressed amusement to Emily, the effect of which, Matilda had once detected; and though mortified, she could not but own to herself, so just was the ridicule, that, under other circumstances, she would herself have joined in the merriment.

One of the great characteristics of society

abroad is its freedom from the overwhelming influence of wealth. In that erratic English community, which, like the gypsy tribe, is governed in all its wanderings by rules and regulations of its own, mixing as little as possible with the natives of the soil, the supreme authority is oftener a matter of contest. It is generally, perhaps, vested in an aristocracy, in the best sense of the word; but from nothing is it so perfectly free as from the dominion of a phetocracy. A mere man of wealth descends from his strong hold, when, leaving behind him "all appliances and means to boot," he puts himself on a level with the economical traveller.

This Sir James began to feel, and was therefore already dissatisfied with Genevese society; and he gladly availed himself of an opportunity, which offered the next day—of being absent for a short time, on an excursion to Chamouni, an expedition, however, which he did not consider as at all suitable for Matilda to join in.

CHAPTER XIII.

The morning on which Sir James left Geneva for Chamouni, was the most brilliant the summer had yet produced. Sunshine at Geneva, like a smile upon the face of a famous frowning beauty, is doubly prized, both for its rarity, and the magnificence of the charms which it illuminates, and to the perfect enjoyment of which it alone is usually wanting.

The fineness of the day had persuaded Lady Ormsby and Emily to accompany Count Santelmo on the Lake immediately after breakfast. It was not yet mid-day when an English travelling carriage, that seemed "stained with the variation of each soil," marking that its inmate had not lingered by the way, turned out of the main road down the lane which led to the campagne on the lake; and after a handsome head in travelling cap had several times been thrust through the window, as if making inquiries, the postillions finally stopped at the gate of Lady

Ormsby's villa. The traveller jumped out, and was at the inner door before he was met by old Wilson, the house steward, who, after giving him a lengthened stare, exclaimed, "My Lord! well, to be sure—to think of your coming upon us all like a little impromptu, as I may say!" for in his residence abroad, Wilson too had acquired a little foreign garnish for his tongue. Then altering his tone he added, "But nothing's happened amiss, I hope?"

"No, nothing at all, Wilson," said Lord Ormsby, "only that I got away sooner than I expected,—that's all. But where's my mother?"

"Why, her Ladyship is just stepped out for a little promenade, I believe, but if you will wait in here, I will fetch her myself." To this Lord Ormsby consented, as he did not wish to have the family meeting under the restraint of a public walk—which was what he perhaps understood by Wilson's "promenade." He was left therefore to himself in the sitting-room, which opened into the conservatory.

"What a happy life," thought he, as he first admired the room itself, and then the thousand little comforts with which its present mistress had adorned it. "Never idle, either of them, I'm

sure," he continued, as his eye wandered among various symptoms of elegant occupation, and at last rested on the instrument,—on the desk of which he was somewhat startled at recognizing, in a well-known hand writing, "Matilda Delaval," marked on the first leaf of his favourite "*Ombra adorata.*"

Full well he recollected the night at Ormsby Castle when she had thus marked that paper, and which had at the time drawn from him a remark upon her thinking it necessary thus to appropriate that which she had every way identified with herself. "Could she then be thus near to him? Was it possible that on the very spot where he was then standing, she had been lately delighting his own family, with those tones to which he had never listened without rapture?—No, he persuaded himself that these were all vain illusions, the offspring of a heated imagination; and that a much more natural explanation was, that, like those little relics he had found at Ormsby, the music had formerly been left there, and that his sister had now been practising it."

He had nearly convinced himself that this must be the case, when he accidentally took up from another table a sketch book, with a pencil,

whose touch he well knew, left between the leaves, at a half-finished view from the very windows of the apartment where he was seated. There could be no mistake here. "Her pencil was always left in the book." This was apparently so trifling a circumstance, that none but a lover's recollection could have retained it as characteristic; but the view spoke for itself; and, as he took it to the window, and devoured it with his eyes, "she is then actually at Geneva," exclaimed he.

That he was not more surprised at the discovery, was what he could not account for. He had never owned to himself that the possibility of such a chance had had the least effect in determining him upon this foreign expedition; whilst it was so very natural he should be desirous to see his mother and sister, that *that* reason alone was quite satisfactory to one never rigid in self-examination of the motives of every action to which he felt inclined.

Whilst still gazing on the sketch which he held in his hand, he was roused by a gentle tap at the farther window, by which the garden entrance passed which led through the conservatory into the room;—and turning round, he caught the

last glimpse of a female form entering at the glass-door. Almost at the same moment a well-known voice exclaimed, whilst passing the conservatory, "My dear Emily, Sir James is gone to Chamouni, and I can stay:"—and the next moment Matilda stood in amazement before him.

That moment was one made up of the purest inspiration of feeling, and was as little amenable to the dictates of preconcerted prudence, as the effusions of gifted genius are to the dogmas of art.

"Augustus!" escaped from her lips, in a tone which thrilled the heart's core of Ormsby, and created an oblivion of all things present and past, save only the delights of that happy time when it was "familiar to him as a household word," even from *her* lips. With her, too, the exclamation had arisen from a momentary self-oblivion. But instead of perpetuating, it caused it in an instant to pass away. Her feelings since her marriage had been so severely disciplined, and under such constant controul, that with a single effort she recovered the appearance of composure. Not that the impression was transient,—that it bounded lightly off,—that it was no longer retained when no longer shewn; but as a rock,

if dashed on the calm still lake before them, would with its first shock only cause outward agitation; and whilst it sunk deeper and deeper within, and was imbedded for ever in the bosom of the waters, stillness would again have settled on their surface,—even so, Matilda conquered all external emotion, at a meeting which was not however without influence on her after-fate.

With perfect calmness she began questioning Ormsby as to his unexpected arrival. But his feelings were much less tractable,—excited as they had been, not only by the exclamation of Matilda, but by the momentary expression of her lovely face, glowing with matchless sensibility. It had seemed to him like the transient glimpse of another, and a better world. In vain he tried to force himself into common topics—to account for his being there,—to stammer out a common-place compliment on meeting her,—to bestow some hackneyed praise on her drawing, which he still held in his hand. At last he exclaimed, "It's all in vain,—I may form resolutions in solitude, in a crowd I may maintain them; but in a meeting like this I can but be—myself! Pardon this language,—this unwarrantable, but involuntary trespass on your tranquillity.

Pity and forget me!" then pressing her hand for an instant to his lips, he rushed into the garden.

It had been a scene of such bewildering emotion, such unexpected interest—previously so utterly unforeseen—so rapid in its development—so abrupt in its termination, that Matilda, wandering unconsciously forth, and finding herself again in her carriage, felt, when first roused by the servant inquiring for orders, like one awakened from the confusion of a dream; but as hastily replying "Home, home," she threw herself back in the carriage, every thing that had passed recurred in all the agitating consciousness of reality, and her feelings now burst forth with a vehemence redoubled by previous restraint.

Having reached the hotel unseen by any one, to remodel her previous arrangements for the day, became a difficult, but an indispensable task. She had settled to dine at Lady Ormsby's villa; she had even sent her maid there with her dressing things. That she must constantly be liable to see Lord Ormsby as a common acquaintance, she was well aware; but to meet him at a family party in the absence of Sir James, she would have felt at any time to be awkward,

perhaps incorrect, and, after the events of the morning, she felt it to be impossible. She was, however, rather puzzled how to give any reason for her absence but the true one. At length she dispatched a note to Lady Ormsby, excusing herself on the ground, that Sir James had engaged her to pass the day with his sister Mrs. Hobson; and what is more, she magnanimously determined to act up to her own excuse, thus punishing herself with positive penance, as well as negative self-denial.

The extent of this additional self-infliction can only be estimated by those who have felt the wearing irritation of vulgar gossip, upon spirits already harrassed and oppressed.

CHAPTER XIV.

The next morning, Matilda was surprised by an unusually early visit from Colonel Canteen.—It was soon evident to her, whilst he turned over the first common-place topics of a morning visit, that he was labouring with some suppressed gossip, to which he attached no small degree of importance. At length he began,—"I believe you were present the other day, when Lady Ormsby attacked me so violently for my allusion to her son's Italian attachment. Well, do you know, it is all perfectly true; even she must now allow that it is satisfactorily confirmed. He has been here, and he is gone again!" "Gone!" said Matilda, by whom that last word alone was heard. "Yes, he's gone; but I thought you would first be surprised to hear that he was come, for that, you know, was quite unexpected. Very unlucky that you missed him yesterday; though, to say the truth, he was not quite himself. But how could you sacrifice yourself to those Hobsons?"

Matilda's answer to this inquiry was interrupted by the entrance of Lady Ormsby and Emily. She immediately perceived, by the expression of both their countenances, that they were out of spirits. There would have been, probably, some little difficulty in introducing the topic which was uppermost in all their minds, had not the Colonel, who, the reader will perceive, was completely upon a wrong scent, been so proud of his supposed triumph as to begin almost immediately:—"Well, you see, Lady Ormsby, I was right: the bird has flown back to his former cage:—we have lost him again. I told you that as long as the Simplon was open, we had no chance of detaining him."

Lady Ormsby had known Colonel Canteen too long, and was too well acquainted with his peculiarities, ever to be seriously offended at any freedom which arose from his desire to appear *au fait* of all the tittle-tattle of society; she therefore answered him quite in a spirit of candour,—"Indeed, I was very much surprised at Ormsby's sudden departure; he would give no satisfactory reason for it; indeed, it seemed a subject on which he did not like much to be questioned. Marshall, his own man, told the servants that he had

intended to stay much longer."—"Why," said the Colonel, "I don't suppose he's such a Don Juan as to make a confidant of his Leporello;—mine, you may depend upon it, is the true way of solving the difficulty,—There was 'metal more attractive' elsewhere. Besides, if his original intention had been to stay longer, what prevented him?—He saw nobody during his stay but myself and Santelmo, who dined with you yesterday. Which of us, I wonder, frightened him away?"

Matilda pretended to be more than ever intent upon her work, but from under her eye she stole a glance at Lady Ormsby, and was relieved at seeing no mark of suspicion on her face. On the contrary, the good old lady almost immediately said, "He was not looking by any means well. If you had seen him, Matilda, you would have thought him dreadfully altered."

It was evident from this, that Ormsby had not mentioned the meeting of the morning to his family; and that they should not otherwise have heard of it was not surprising, considering that Matilda had stopped at the garden entrance, and that the servants were all occupied in searching

for their mistress to inform her of the arrival. But, upon hearing from Lady Ormsby this evident ignorance of what had happened, Matilda felt in a dilemma how to act. On the one hand, the usual ingenuousness of her disposition was averse from any thing like concealment;—on the other, it was apparent that Ormsby had been desirous that his mother and sister should remain in ignorance of her influence upon his actions; and ought she not to have some regard for his feelings, in refraining from the disclosure of a circumstance so flattering to her own vanity?

These two different impulses might have been so equally balanced, as to leave her decision doubtful, had not the presence of Colonel Canteen determined her otherwise wavering opinions in favour of silence on the subject; as she knew that, in his hands, such a confession would at once become matter of conjecture and inquiry, to which she did not feel equal.

Emily, who had been searching about at the other end of the room, now turned the conversation, by saying, "Matilda, I wanted your sketch book this morning; meaning to copy that last view, by way of occupying myself,

after we lost poor Augustus. But I could not find it anywhere at the villa, nor can I see it here."

Matilda full well recollected in whose hands she had last seen it; but, concealment of the interview itself, of course, entailed equivocation about this particular incident in it. She therefore only replied, "It was at your house when I saw it last."

Soon after this, the visitors departed together. When Matilda was left alone, she could not help feeling rather dissatisfied with herself, for the concealment of her interview with Ormsby. True, her motives for it were most innocent, originating entirely in a desire to spare the feelings of one, for whom she would have made any personal sacrifice, but on whom she had hitherto been doomed to inflict nothing but pain.

There is, to a naturally candid and ingenuous mind, something no less repugnant in the suppression of the truth from those who justly claim our confidence, than in its wilful perversion to a casual acquaintance. And to one unused to the trammels of deceit, the intentional concealment of a fact, implying a tacit denial of it, often leads to as much embarrassment and difficulty

in its consequences, as the support of a positive invention.

The greatest disadvantage attending this unlucky want of candour in the present instance, was, that it first accustomed Matilda's mind to couple Lord Ormsby's image with the necessity of concealment;—that it first gave the unaccountable charm of forbidden pleasure to those wayward recollections, which, hitherto, so far from assuming the character of guilty pleasure, had been no less innocent than mournful.

CHAPTER XV.

When Sir James Dornton returned from Chamouni, he was loud in his lamentations at having missed Lord Ormsby, and expressed a determination to take the first opportunity of cultivating his acquaintance. It appeared impossible, that he should be impelled to this solely by a desire to do that, which, for some reason or other, seemed disagreeable to Matilda; and it is but justice to him to say, that it afterwards turned out that the real cause of his eagerness on the subject, was the interest he took in the projected rail-way, through his property, at Delaval Park; by which he expected, that his income would in time be nearly doubled; and as, to facilitate that plan, Lord Ormsby's concurrence, as a near neighbour, was to a certain degree necessary, he thought, with a true vulgar feeling, that he could so far conciliate him by civility and attention, as to diminish the difficulty of obtaining his consent.

In a few days, the little *coterie* at the villa returned to their daily habits of easy intercourse, in which Lord Ormsby's ephemeral appearance had been rather an incident than an interruption. It is hardly necessary to say, that the sketch book was never found; and the cause of our hero's sudden arrival, and as sudden departure, continued an enigma to all but Matilda.

Even Colonel Canteen had his confidence in his own penetration on the subject a little shaken, by hearing from some of his numerous correspondents at Rome, that Lord Ormsby had not made that place his destination.

Matilda now felt daily more and more interested in the prospects and future fate of young Santelmo; and as progressive intimacy made her more acquainted with his character, she warmly sympathized in his sorrows, and was even inoculated with the enthusiasm with which he seemed devoted to the cause of liberty. She had latterly, however, felt rather uncomfortable at his seeming to seek her society, in preference to that of Emily. This was casually explained in the course of one of their frequent conversations, in a manner at which her friend could not have been hurt, though she might have been dis-

tressed. "I was utterly ignorant of the charm of female society," said Santelmo, "before the acquaintance of the inmates of these walls became, in my misfortune, an unexpected blessing;—and a blessing I am still infatuated enough to think it, though it has only raised—hopes I cannot even call them—but wishes, which can never be realized. Branded as my solitary fate is, with the curse of singleness and isolation, it should have been my duty to have avoided temptation—to have had especial care that sympathy should never shadow another's happier lot with the reflection of my misery."

"You surely do not rightly estimate yourself," said Matilda; "so far from your fate being cast in a misanthropic mould, I think I never knew any one whose taste seemed more peculiarly fitted for the duties of domestic life."

"You have only seen me," Santelmo continued, "under the impulse of feelings, which, for the time, have been irresistible. But still my ruling passion is patriotism; my fate is tied to the fortunes of my unhappy country. How, then, could I think of permanent domestic ties?—how could I aspire to be the founder of a family—to undertake the duties of a husband and a

father—when I could offer only perpetual proscription for a settlement—a dungeon for a dower—and slavery for an inheritance?"

"But why view only the gloomy side of the question?" said Matilda; "the spirit of the age is now working in your favour; the wishes of the good and liberal, of every country, are enlisted on your side; and long days of happiness and independence are yet in store for Italy."

"That some such latent hope is the spring that supports this otherwise burthensome existence, I will not attempt to conceal; yet, none but those who, like me, have their whole soul engrossed by the anticipation, are aware how very distant that day may yet be;—by how many conflicting difficulties it may yet be almost interminably delayed.—But I am growing infinitely too political," said he, suddenly checking himself.

"Oh, no!" said Matilda, "pray go on; ever since my childhood, I have always felt an interest in Italy, and all that relates to it, for which I am unable to account." Thus encouraged, Santelmo proceeded to discuss, more at length than he had hitherto done, his own and his country's prospects; the course of which discus-

sion was occasionally diverted by inquiries and observations on the part of Matilda, which her acute and cultivated mind brought to bear on a topic, in which her feelings were powerfully excited.

I shall however give, for the sake of continuity, Santelmo's uninterrupted reflections, such as they often occurred to him; reminding the reader, that they are the opinions at once of an Italian, and of one who was an enthusiast on the subject on which he was speaking.

"*Italia bella*," said he, "never perhaps so perfectly monopolized the exclusive affections of any other of her sons; for I had never known a mortal mother's care. Allowed in early childhood to run wild about my grandfather's palace, the soft and gentle nature of Italy supplied the place of my lost parent. It was her sunny smile that first gladdened my heart; it was her balmy breath that kissed from my cheek the tears of infancy. As years passed over my head, self-taught, I filled my memory with legends of her early greatness and renown, and inspirations of her poetical pre-eminence. Blinded by filial love and gratitude, absorbed in her former fame,

and enwrapt in her transcendent beauty, I was yet ignorant of her present moral degradation. At that time, under the protection of the mighty genius, who then ruled the destinies of Europe, her fallen state was never marked by outward opprobrium; on the contrary, with the considerate kindness of a partial protector, he disguised, as much as possible, her disgraceful subjection, flattered her little vanities, spent much in adorning and improving her appearance, and, what was most valued, allowed her a share in his glory. If she had ceased to be respectable, she was still, apparently, respected.

"What a change in her situation, when, from the cherished and pampered favourite of a mighty man, she sank at once into the purchased slave of mean and sordid natures; kept as the mere servile instrument of their pleasure; pillaged, insulted, despised, and brutalized! Then it was that I felt all the infamy of her degraded state—the prostitution of her beauties by boorish strangers. Then it was, too, that better hopes had been excited, that even the much-respected England had held out deceitful expectations, that her disgrace might be obliterated, and

that she might be again restored to the society of nations. Thus the bitterness of disappointment was added, as a consummation to her misery.

"Maddened at the indignities offered to my native land, whose injuries I resented as those of a parent, I willingly joined those who were united on the glorious principles of individual liberty and national independence. Unfortunately, indiscretions, provoked by acts of galling tyranny on the part of the Government, precipitated abortive attempts, which have themselves tended to postpone our ultimate success. But it is some consolation to think, that no prudence or discretion would have guaranteed personal security, under a Government with whom the mere suspicion of entertaining in silence and in secret certain opinions, is a positive crime; and by whom the mere possession of popular qualities, undirected to any political object, is considered to compromise the safety of the State.

"The failure of these premature insurrections has been, with some friends, I fear, as well as foes, conclusive as to our incapacity for freedom. This opinion, I think, has been hastily and harshly taken up, without reference either to

the peculiar difficulties under which we labour, or the unparallelled power to which we are opposed. What instance can be produced of a nation succeeding in obtaining liberty in her first struggle for it? and is it nothing, that we have to contend against the accumulated mis-government of centuries, which has produced and confirmed that very ignorance, in the body of the people, which itself incapacitates them for appreciating the advantages of a better state of things—thus seeming at first to perpetuate that reciprocal cause and effect, which must for ever bar social improvement? But even in more favoured countries, regeneration has not been the work of a moment. Even England, who afterwards achieved the unique renown of the success of a bloodless revolution, had first to wade through the wild and turbulent violence of Cromwell's time, and at the Restoration again relapsed into servility and degradation, until at length her hour arrived. Fickle France, always in extremes, and charmed with novelty, sought at first with avidity (regardless of the means by which it was attained) the Utopian perfection of civil liberty, of which the shadow now is only held at the beck of the Bourbons. Is it nothing for us,

stigmatised as we have been, individually, as Italians, with a proneness to assassination, and denounced as a sect bound together by a vow of sanguinary extermination, that, in all our attempts not an outrage has been committed, not a drop of blood has been shed? No Louis to the guillotine—no Charles to the scaffold. Where then are our proceedings censured? Is it in that land of political fanaticism, where Sandt's dagger was dignified with the plea of patriotism? Or is this respect for the persons of sovereigns found fault with by the half-savage Serf of the Autocrat, who, when tyranny passes endurance, prefers the murdering the man to attempting the controul of his measures? Perhaps the excessive mildness, the moral virtue of those concerned in the projected revolutions, was one cause of the failure. But this is an amiable error, which one can never regret. The people, however, have received sufficient warning not again to put their confidence in princes. If these arch deceivers should hereafter suffer from a recollection of their perfidy, their blood must rest upon their own heads. But Heaven avert such a calamity! and may the next attempt, whenever it takes

place, if rewarded with success, be equally deserving of it with the last! I have very much under-rated our difficulties, when I have compared them with those previously existing in any former struggle between the excited energies of the people on one hand, and the established authorities of the state on the other; for against us, for the first time, has been arrayed an unheard-of confederation of sovereigns—a joint-stock company for the propagation of despotism,—who reverse the benefits of modern mechanical improvements,—perverting principles which have given preternatural powers to our physical exertions, to their own purpose of paralyzing mental energies. The members of this imperial partnership concern are united for the suppression of the free agency of men, and for the reduction of human nature into a mere engine of brute force, to be governed by a touch of their pigmy fingers. In furtherance of which plan, they at once crush the least appearance of opening liberty, beneath the overwhelming weight of their military machine of a million-man-power.

"There is much in all this to abate our confidence, but nothing to justify despondency;

fer in proportion as the physical force opposed to us is greater than any previously known, the intellectual powers enlisted on our side are more than ever developed; and the Spirit of the Age hovers over our heads, scattering, in all corners of that soil cultivated by knowledge, the certain seeds of future freedom. But the present generation, alas! may pass away before the fruit is ripe. Engaged as I am, in a cause like this, of which the future issue is doubtful, the present danger alone certain, am I in a condition to form domestic ties? No—never shall a wife of mine be condemned to tread in the faltering footsteps of La Confalonieri, who, having flown to the Fountain Head for mercy, found there no manly sympathy in a woman's sorrows; for even after her husband's sentence had received that partial remission, in which, if life could hardly be said to be spared, death at least was not inflicted,—she was denied the consolation of knowing it, and with the aggravated agony, excited by the dread of arriving too late, was made by the Holy Man of Vienna to retrace her painful pilgrimage: a penance, doubtless, for her heroical exercise of conjugal devotion!—No—my die is cast,—my fortune has been

sacrificed—my home has been abandoned—my heart and soul are devoted to the cause of freedom! And whilst I struggle, I must have nought to distract me; if I fall, I will leave none to regret me."

CHAPTER XVI.

MATILDA's happiness in the society in which she was living at the villa was before long interrupted, by the increasing restlessness of Sir James, who, without having any particular object in view, became, from feeling himself of no particular consequence where he was, anxious for change of place, without its ever occurring to him that he might possibly go farther and fare worse. This impatience had increased, too, since the recent departure of the Hobsons, as he missed his daily dose of flattery and attention, which was always administered to him by all that family. Tom Hobson had all along voted Geneva a stupid spooney sort of a place; his sisters sympathized in his feelings; the mother longed for something new to talk about; and though old Hobson had such a general dislike to locomotion, that he would always rather remain where he was, wherever that might be; yet, as we observed on a former occasion, his opinion

upon family arrangements always rather shewed itself in word than in deed.

Matilda's objections to moving were two-fold, as she disliked leaving Lady Ormsby as much as following Mrs. Hobson. But it was evident, from Sir James's manner of announcing his plan, that opposition would be in vain. She therefore took an affectionate leave of both mother and daughter, and a most friendly farewell of Santelmo, in whom, after his account of himself, she had felt a redoubled interest, though of a more melancholy description, as she was compelled to separate it from that she felt for her friend, with whom it had previously been her delight to think he was likely to be united.

Our travellers quitted Geneva for Milan, by the Valois, and the Simplon. Having always felt delighted myself at getting out of La Valois, I shall certainly not think myself justified in detaining my readers in it, or offending their ears with its guttural German patois, or their eyes with its goîtres; and, as I am not composing imaginary travels, but recording a true tale,—not describing the character of countries, but of persons, I do not think it necessary to retail over again the thousand times told wonders of the

Simplon—that extraordinary effort of industry and art.

The Simplon is only one of the many bonds with which Napoléon has bound the rebellious and aspiring Alps down to the permanent controul of their mother earth. It was perhaps the partial success with which he here contended against the elements, in this which had formerly been one of their strongest outworks, that afterwards made him fool-hardy enough to dare their utmost power in the very centre of their frozen regions,—a temerity which ultimately cost him his empire and his life. Here, however, in spite of his subsequent defeats, his power is still acknowledged; and long after the generation which alternately flattered and reviled him shall have passed away, his memory will live in gigantic monuments carved in the solid Alps.

Immediately on the descent to Duomo d'Ossola, Italy does not at once meet you with all her winning smiles, but seems at the first introduction to maintain some reserve of her charms; nor is it till you arrive at the little Borgo of Baveno, on the borders of the Lago Maggiore, that she breaks forth in all her unrivalled brilliancy of beauty.

It was late when the Dorntons arrived at Baveno; and when, leaving Sir James in the inner room smoking his segar, and grumbling at the heat, Matilda stepped out upon the balcony, the prospect before her was softened, not obscured, by the shadows of a summer's evening; and its loveliness was enhanced, rather than hidden, by a transparent veil of silvery moonlight. If that brilliancy, which an hour before would have dazzled the eyesight, was somewhat subdued, it was only to give their due share to the enjoyment of the other senses; whilst the softest of breezes, rippling the surface of the waters, just enough to give varied animation to the beams of the rising moon, came fraught with all the fragrance of that sweetest of gardens, *Isola Bella*; at the same time regaling the ear with the distant sounds of one of the native melodies of this land of music.

As Matilda's eye wandered in admiration of all above and below, the *lucciole* of the earth seemed to emulate the stars of the sky in the universality of bespangled illumination.

"'Tis wonderful," thought Matilda, "that all this should not strike me as new,—that I should entertain an indistinct idea of having sometime

seen it before. Often in trifles our wayward memory mocks us with a faint shadow of previous recollections; but that I, whose earliest remembrances are confined within the narrow and remote bounds of Delaval Park, upon first arriving in Italy, and expecting only the unaccustomed charm of a new and brilliant acquaintance, should experience the more endearing feelings of restoration to an early friend—is most strange."

She was still endeavouring in vain to account for this inexplicable circumstance, when she was suddenly summoned to supper by her husband, —who, instead of admiring any thing, was only complaining of being equally hot and hungry.

The next day, betimes, they found themselves in all the bustle of the gay and crowded streets of Milan. When Sir James had sought out the Hobsons, he found them engaged with a new acquaintance, whom all the young ladies considered a great catch. This was one Walter Woodhead, Esquire; who, upon coming of age in a few months, would succeed to a fine estate in the County Palatine of Chester; and a most unsophisticated specimen he was, from that modern Bœotia:—a fine fat-headed home-brewed young fellow, who, if he could stand the vulgar

test of knowing chalk from cheese, it was almost the only thing he did know; being, *au reste*, as heavy, as strong, and as rich as one of his own Cheshires. To him the Hobsons had been introduced by his travelling tutor, the Rev. Mr. Simperton, whom they had formerly met acting as a sort of spiritual master of the ceremonies at the balls at Buxton and at Blackpool, in the course of their different summer excursions from Manchester. Mr. Simperton was now travelling with his young charge, almost a solitary instance of the old bear-leader system; guardians and parents having at length discovered, that to couple a young fellow with a man twice as old as himself, but who knows not half as much of the ways of the world, is not the best mode to initiate him into life.

But if Mr. Simperton filled the situation, he did not at all, either in stiffness or austerity, recal the character of that almost obsolete class. He by no means meant to be a millstone round his pupil's neck, but rather a sort of bell-collar, which might chime in with its own gingling vivacity, at the frisks of him to whom it was attached: and the heavy mass to which he was at present tied, seemed rather to require some such

exhilarating accompaniment. Mr. Simperton was certainly turned of forty, but a studious attention to appearance tended at first sight to conceal that fact.

When, upon the entrance of the Dorntons, he made the sign to his pupil to conclude their morning visit, he might have been taken for the younger man of the two, but that the well-made light pepper-and-salt coat, which he had substituted for clerical black, served, as his brother parson Tynte would have said, to recal the colour of a certain grey mixture on his head. His partially grizzled locks were now, however, admirably arranged in carefully careless curls, so that the set of coat and his crop seemed of equal importance.

"Only think," said Mrs. Hobson to Lady Matilda, as their other visitors left the room, "how pleased the girls were to see our old friend Simperton again! I could not believe my eyes, when we first found him, rowing about on Lake *Margery*, there, in a little linen jacket and a straw hat big enough to make a bonnet."

It was evident that the acquaintance of these two beaux was a great event to the Hobson girls. Poor Miss Hobson, however, was for the present

incapacitated from partaking of her share of the advantage; for she was really seriously indisposed, though not with a malady of a very interesting description. The fact was, that being, as her fiery locks betokened, rather of a warm temperament, and suffering more severely than the others did from the heat of the weather, she had overdone her desire to

> "Bid the winter come,
> To thrust his icy fingers in her maw."

In short, sweet Betty Hobson was now suffering from what Mrs. Hobson called "*sour bettis.*" She had, in the course of frequent visits to the Ristoratore, used no discretion in the quantities in which she had inserted "*Grammelate, gelate, Sorbetti, Limonati;*" and, strange to say, cold on her stomach had produced heat on her face, presenting a singular mixture, like a volcano in winter; only that here the ice was internal, and the outward head was, as usual, crowned with its natural warm and glowing colouring.

In consequence of this calamity, Sir James having determined upon inviting one of his nieces, Miss Anne was the favoured person who was to accompany Matilda in her first visit to *La Scala.*

At Milan, *la Scàla* and existence are synonimous. It does not speak highly for the healthful energies of a people, when an opera is their exclusive business, not their occasional amusement;—when they always postpone realities for representations, and can in a theatre prefer sound to substance, and desert Alfieri for Rossini. But though one may regret, one cannot wonder at this, when even as a stranger one feels that there is something in the air of Italy which gives a peculiar charm to music. The same singers, and even the same sounds, have not the same effect when heard elsewhere—

> "That strain again! it had a dying fall.
> Oh, it came o'er my ear like the sweet south,
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour."

This speaks the same feeling in regard to the mystic influence produced by the soft and soothing union of harmony and of climate.

Absorbed as Matilda was in her attention to one of the most perfect performances that this unrivalled establishment had ever given, the opera was concluded, before, in looking round the magnificent area, she perceived that she herself was

an object of general attention to the crowded circle. Her own eye, unaccustomed to the comparative obscurity of a foreign theatre, could but imperfectly distinguish any one. But to those whom nightly habit had familiarized the doubtful gloom, quite enough was discernible to circulate a general inquiry concerning the distinguished and beautiful stranger.

Any sensations of involuntary satisfaction at this universal admiration in Matilda, were suddenly checked by the sight of one object in an opposite box, the internal light in which rendered its inmates plainly visible. It was the figure of a man, whose attention a lady was endeavouring, with much animation, to engross, but whose eyes (and they were the eyes of Ormsby) were intently fixed upon herself.

It was well that she had this little preparation for what afterwards occurred; for, towards the end of the ballet, the door of her box opened, and Sir James, followed by Lord Ormsby, entered.

An opera box is, perhaps, of all places in the world, the best fitted for the necessary operation of undergoing an awkward or embarrassing interview. The doubtful light—the divided

attention—the confused noise—are all highly favourable to the assumption of artificial, or the concealment of real feelings. But though possessing, in perfection, this advantage of situation, and somewhat assured, by observing that Ormsby himself was perfectly composed, and very different from when she saw him last, yet it required all her exertions to appear outwardly unmoved, when Sir James began,—"I have been telling Lord Ormsby, Matilda, that you regretted, as much as I did, the not having seen him at all, as he passed through Geneva."

It had been entirely out of consideration for Ormsby, that she had originally omitted all mention of that meeting; yet, for the world, she would not he should have known that such had been her conduct. To a man of Sir James's character, she could not have been expected to volunteer unnecessary confidence, yet she could not help feeling guilty when thus convicted of intentional concealment. Oppressed as she was with this sensation, she was relieved at having something else to say, when Sir James, in an audible whisper, prompted her—"Won't you ask him to dinner?" She almost unconsciously repeated the invitation.

The ballet being now concluded, Sir James, taking his niece himself, left Lord Ormsby to hand Matilda to her carriage. In descending, he said,—"Do not entirely deprive me of your society, and I will promise to deserve it better than when last we met; but, for God's sake, let me owe nothing to the constraint of your late echoed invitation."

"Oh! pray come though," said Matilda, in a hurried voice; "I have much to tell you of your mother and Emily:" and thus it was their renewed intimacy began.

CHAPTER XVII.

"More know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows," is a saying which, in its usual modern application, is much more flattering to the notorious individual than it probably was in its original sense. For instance, what person at all *repandu* in the world, has ever dropped for the first time into society of an inferior cast, that he has not at once found his new friends perfectly acquainted with all the most minute particulars of his conduct and connexions—that he has not been immediately gratified with the most recent intelligence of the welfare of some distant relations, of whose existence he would previously have himself been doubtful—that he has not had recalled to his recollection some common-place unimportant incident of his own early life, which he had till then forgotten? Those who are thus opening with him a fresh account of acquaintanceship, seem anxious to support the credit side of it, by scraping together every sort of doubtful

claims. Having gossiped with a second-cousin, —domiciliated at Bath or at Cheltenham, is considered an undeniable passport to intimacy; and as they admit of no statute of limitations, the having seen their new victim as a child, or at school, is put forward as an outstanding bond for the future.

Few ever experienced more varied attacks of this kind than did Lord Ormsby, when, upon first arriving at Sir James Dornton's apartments, he found, besides Lady Matilda, the party then assembled, consisting of Mrs. Hobson, Miss Anne Hobson, Mr. Tom Hobson, and Messieurs Woodhead and Simperton. Miss Hobson was still not presentable; and old Hobson was completing her discomfort by sulking at home, under pretence of keeping her company.

Sir James was still fussing himself in the dining-room about the arrangement of the dinner, as he was as yet too little of a finished cosmopolite to understand, that a five-franc-a-head scramble, at an Italian hotel, can never be drilled into quite the same *martinet* discipline as a well-organized three-week-bespoken banquet in London. Nor, indeed, is it at all necessary that it should, when people give the dinner for the sake

of the party, not make the party for the sake of the dinner.

When Lord Ormsby entered the room, Walter Woodhead and Tom Hobson were looking out of the window, criticizing the driving of the Milan coachman, whom they laughed at unmercifully, for taking the wrong side of the street. Mrs. Hobson and Lady Matilda were conversing on one of the sofas; if that could be called conversation, which consisted exclusively of active infliction on one side, and patient endurance on the other. Mr. Simperton, on another sofa, was saying soft things to Miss Anne, not on his own account, but as proxy for his pupil,—between whom and the young lady he was anxious, for reasons which will afterwards appear, that there should exist a mutual good understanding; in the advancement of which plan, he displayed a perfection of tact, which might have had its effect upon a more refined taste than that of Miss Anne; as, in puffing his pupil, he was eloquent in the praise of the beauty, not of his person, but his place; and the cultivation, not of his mind, but his estate.

Two congenial spirits, like Ormsby and Matilda, brought suddenly into contact with such

an unsuitable set as this, would, in ordinary circumstances, have found their best resource, and surest defence, in exclusive attention to each other. But from this they were, of course, debarred, by the peculiar awkwardness of their relative situation: so that Lord Ormsby soon fell an easy prey to Mr. Simperton; who, rising from his seat, accosted him with a sweet smile, and, "the temperature's intensely tropical to-day, my *Lud*."

Perceiving, by the tone and manner of Lord Ormsby's assent to this affectedly-turned truism, that he was not aware whom he was addressing, he continued, with the same smile, "My name, my *Lud*, is Simperton of Sydney—had the pleasure of meeting your lordship when resident at Cambridge, in *statu pupillari*, at the rooms of my much-valued friend, Doctor Droning,—who, if he had not unfortunately soon been removed to a better place, would before now have been happily promoted to the Bench. Poor Doctor Droning! Your *l*udship and I had both an irreparable loss in the Doctor."

Lord Ormsby, smiling a little at Mr. Simperton's seeming to think, that though the Doctor was in a better place, still he would have been best as a bishop, proceeded to assure him,

that to himself, personally, the Doctor's loss had not been so perfectly irreparable as it otherwise might have been, from the simple circumstance of his never having been in his company but that once, when he was vice-chancellor.

Hardly had our hero recovered from this attack, when he was assailed by Mrs. Hobson, with, "May I make so bold as to ask, my Lord, whether you still let the *jetty deux* play at Ormsby Castle, as we see when we went touring there? I thought 'em vastly fine; but my good man can't bear to hear them named, because the gardener wetted him to the skin. Tom said, because he only gave him a shilling—but I'm sure you wouldn't approve of such doings." Without waiting for Lord Ormsby's ready disclaimer of any share in old Hobson's ducking, she continued, "Perhaps you may recollect coming into the library for a book when we was all looking at the picturs. I'm sure our Betty said you were the best worth seeing—but I won't make you vain. Yes, and we see you again as we was driving away—you was riding with a strange lady; and Tom, who was sitting on the bar, had told the boy to spin along, and the chaise did jingle, to be sure, and we came clat-

tering behind you, and the road was narrow, and the lady's horse reared frightful to see, and a proper rage you was in with the postboy; and the boy told us afterwards it wasn't the Honourable Miss Arlingford neither. I wonder who it was! Do you recollect who it was?"

To this she received no direct answer; for she had at last touched upon an incident which had not escaped the memory of her new acquaintance; and full well did both he and Matilda remember who that lady was.

Tom Hobson now coming up, began his attempt to ingratiate himself, in a manner as strikingly characteristic as either of the preceding.

"Uncommon nice bit of horse-flesh, I may say, my Lord, that tit of yours as won the cup at Manchester last spring. I talked it all over before with your man Bill Jenkins, and he told me he thought as how he could do the trick. Prime fellow, Bill—I like him vastly."

"Really, Sir," said Lord Ormsby, half-laughing, "I don't know whether I ought to be most grateful for your friendly feeling towards my horse or my groom."

"Can these, then, be the connexions of Ma-

tilda," thought Lord Ormsby, in the only moment of respite that they allowed him before the entrance of Sir James,—who immediately began a hundred elaborate apologies for the dinner, expressing fears that it would be very bad, and excuses for having asked him when he had not a *maison montée*. In vain did Lord Ormsby assure him that, at least as far as he was concerned, his uneasiness was unnecessary; for that he was probably more used than any other of the party to the scramble of an Italian pic-nic.

Matilda, of course, fell to Lord Ormsby's share as a neighbour at dinner. Since the last time when at Lord Eatington's such had been their relative situation, their feelings of mutual interest had certainly not abated; but the embarrassment which they then experienced, was in the present instance much diminished. And as the paucity of common topics among the party assembled, caused the conversation to be only occasionally dribbled out in no easy flow, they found themselves almost imperceptibly conversing, with much of the ease, if not the confidence, of former times.

Towards the end of dinner, this was interrupted by Sir James, who, when a little warmed

with an incessant fire of bottomless *bicchieri* of champagne, began to shew that most infallible mark of a vulgar mind—the knowing no medium between form and familiarity. We have seen him needlessly punctilious in his formal apologies for the dinner; and he was now as unceremoniously familiar—in bantering his new guest in a manner which a man of the world would have known that nothing but intimacy could sanction.

At first, indeed, he only commenced with, "When we met you in town, Lord Ormsby, I had no idea that you meant so soon to return upon your travels.—Pray, how did that happen?"

"I'm afraid I can only plead a truant disposition, good my Lord," said Lord Ormsby; "and that we Anglo-Italians, like dram-drinkers, can never resist just one drop more. It is a taste that grows more inveterate from every indulgence."

"Oh," said Sir James, "I dare say that's all just so, but we can give a better guess than that. We know pretty well what brings you so often across the Alps;—we've heard that there's a lady in the case."

Lord Ormsby almost started, from the con-

sciousness that, in this last instance, Sir James had stumbled upon something like the truth, though in a very different sense from what he intended. He only, however, replied, "that he was quite at a loss to know to what he could allude."

"Oh, you remember, Matilda, don't you," said the Baronet, "all they used to say about Lord Ormsby and the Lady at Rome?"

Matilda pretended she did not recollect. "Well, that's very odd," said Sir James, "for I'm sure when I first went down to Delaval Park, in your uncle's time, one used to hear of nothing else.—It was in every body's mouth. For my part, I could not make out why they all occupied themselves so much about it."

A new light flashed upon Lord Ormsby's mind on hearing this, the effect of which was strengthened by his knowledge of the character of the late Lord Wakefield, and the evident embarrassment that he remarked in Matilda at Sir James's allusion to that time. He now was convinced, that the whole report was concerted for the sake of alienating from him Matilda's affections; and though he was justly impatient at the Baronet's vulgar impertinence, yet he could not but be grateful to him for having thus involuntarily

given him the explanation of his former mistress's apparently unaccountable fickleness.

And fatal indeed this intelligence proved. It enabled his imagination to represent Matilda, not as an easy changeling, but as the victim of consummate artifice. It restored her character to all its original faultless charm, and thus removed the only feeble barrier which his reason had ever been able to oppose, to the daily increasing power of that resistless passion, against which he was still in vain endeavouring to contend.

Sir James would have thought that he had foresworn his birthright as an Englishman, if he had, under any circumstances, foregone that most civilized and gallant of our customs, by which we daily prove to the fair sex, when they put us to the trial, that we prefer the worst of wine to the best of company. But a little Italian Marchese, whom Sir James had, somehow or other, picked up, and to whom no one had addressed a word, and who had not understood a syllable of what was addressed to any one else, followed the ladies as a matter of course; and Lord Ormsby, profiting by his mistake, soon afterwards left the room, as he did not feel particularly anxious either to discuss politics with Sir James and Mr.

Simperton, or sporting with Tom and his friend Woodhead.

The Baronet and the Parson, therefore, those temporal and spiritual pillars of the state, remained reciprocating church and king principles in the most orthodox duet. Though it is but justice to them to say, that they joined to the most unbounded admiration of their own government, the most undisguised dislike of that under which they were then living, and to the establishment of which their friends at home had mainly contributed. But so it is, that however bigoted a thorough-paced Tory may be at home, I never knew but one Englishman who was not a Liberal abroad.

Tom in the mean time was puffing off the courier, Pierre, to his friend Woodhead.—"By Jove," he said, "a fellow who, when I saw him in England, I should have said was a spooney, who looked as if, had you taken and turned him twice round, he would not have known where he was; and now he shall ride against time with any man in Europe, I don't care who."

There were very few subjects in the world that would have provoked the phlegmatic Woodhead into a contradiction, much less an argu-

ment; but this was exactly the one most likely to produce that effect. The spirit of Nimrod was roused in him, when he heard a foreign *chap* set up as a crack horseman. He therefore quietly objected, that he could not be compared to young Coverdale, who won the Great Steeple Chase last year!

"Steeple Chase!" said Tom; "I'll bet Pierre sees more steeples in one day than Coverdale has in his life. But I'll tell you what he shall do, that will beat all your Barclay matches hollow. I'll back him for five hundred, to ride a hundred miles *a day, all the year around.*"

"Done!" said young Woodhead, with (for him) most unusual energy of manner.

At this awful monosyllable, Tom was, as he would himself have expressed it, rather taken aback. The offer had been mere bully on his part; he was not at all sure of his man, and had little expected, from any thing he had previously seen of Woodhead, that he would have turned so sharply upon him. But, in one respect, he had underrated the young squire, whose intellects in the more negative department, were not so contemptible. Though they did not enable him to execute much himself, they gave him a

pretty good idea of what was impossible for any one else to execute. Therefore, when Tom pretended to laugh it off, as a joke, Woodhead claimed it seriously as a bet.

The dispute growing loud, disturbed the politicians, who interfered to quash it at once; and for fear it should be renewed, they proposed adjourning to the ladies. There they found Lord Ormsby, who, after he had patiently submitted to every variety of frivolous question and observation from Mrs. and the Miss Hobsons,—all interlarded with,—"Sir—my Lord, I mean," was at length allowed quietly to establish himself by the side of Matilda, at the piano-forte.

The words of a song are, generally speaking, proverbially a matter of indifference; so completely are they a mere vehicle for music, that, like the carriage which brings our friends to dinner, they seldom excite our observation. Many a Miss apostrophises her music-master by the hour, as, "*Ben mio!*"—"*Unico speme della mia vita!*"—utterly unconscious that she is expressing herself at all tenderly. And in the majority of singers, one can no more decide, from the expression, that the topic may be more interesting than the Catch of—"Jolly, jolly six-

pence,"—than from the pronunciation, that it may not be Hebrew.

But the language of love, in its lyric garb, though it falls perfectly powerless on the ear that boasts no kindred affinity, has, when it harmonises with existing feelings, a resistless attraction. So thought Lord Ormsby, as he hung enraptured on every note of Matilda's, who sang with an expression peculiar to himself, and equal to her musical execution. And as he joined her in an impassioned duet, he felt it a relief to be allowed, even in song, to give utterance to those heart-felt sentiments, which, in prose or in his own person, he dared not whisper.

In a word, this was a day, marked by the final abandonment, on his part, of any attempts to resist the indulgence of a passion, which, if hopeless, could only tend to his own misery; if successful, must insure the utter ruin of its object—whose welfare he would have vowed was far dearer to him than his own.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Day passed after day, and week succeeded week, and still found Lord Ormsby habitually frequenting Lady Matilda's rooms in a morning, and her opera-box in an evening. Nor was there any thing in their easy intercourse calculated to excite observation in others, or uneasiness in Matilda herself. For such is the happy construction of society abroad, that between persons at all of the same set, the effort is required, not to meet, but to avoid meeting. The growth of intimacy is there natural, spontaneous, and unrestrained, like that of the luxuriant vegetation of the happy climate itself. Society does not there require to be *forced*, as in the *hot-houses* of London; where, with various devices of pruning and grafting, constant care of *nailing down* one, and *cutting* another, acquaintanceship is sometimes brought to an artificial perfection.

But though the style of society in which they then lived, prevented Matilda from feeling any

impropriety in the mere act of daily seeing Lord Ormsby, yet there were some circumstances which gradually opened her eyes, as to the prudence of such habitual indulgence. Involuntarily, she found herself most frequently practising those pieces of music which he had most admired; till, whilst she herself thought that she sung nothing else so ill, every indifferent individual observed how much the most perfect in them appeared both her taste and execution. Unintentionally too, she found herself copying over and over again, in miniature, a favourite picture of his; still thinking that she had never yet hit the expression, though her table was covered over with accurate fac-similes of it.

I have said, that, in Matilda's education, the influence of fixed principles upon conduct had never been inculcated. She was the creature of impulse, and of feeling, guided only by an innate sense of right, and protected by the most sensitive feminine delicacy. She now felt dissatisfied with herself, though utterly unconscious of any thing incorrect, even in thought.

In the mean time, the intimacy was constantly encouraged by Sir James, who was flattered by shewing off, as he thought in his train, so dis-

tinguished an individual as Lord Ormsby. Besides which, he never lost sight of the solid advantages he thought might be derived in his own county, from maintaining the connexion.

Still Matilda became anxious to move; and as the autumnal stream of babbling English was flowing South, the Baronet willingly consented to proceed to Rome.

Who shall attempt to analyse the sensations excited by Rome—unique and unaccountable as they are—felt even by him most disposed to laugh at the hyperbolical enthusiasm of the classical pedant?—Rome is still Rome. Though Cardinals are not Consuls, and the last dying embers of spiritual despotism are smouldering on those hearths where were kindled the first sparks of civil liberty,—still is it the Eternal City. And why?—Why should those monuments of the olden time, seen here, cause an impression felt no where else?—Local situation cannot cause it. Ruins are most impressive when abstracted and isolated; whereas here they are defiled with all the daily filth of incongruous inhabitancy.—It is not mental association;—for what are, or were, in point of fact, the objects of our admiration? The Coliseum, that stupendous undertaking,

for the mere gratification of savage cruelty, and brutal barbarism; — Temples, those favoured abodes of ignorance and idolatry;—and Baths, the works of men only known for mental imbecility, or moral depravity, who have thus immortalized themselves by these monuments of their physical indulgences.

But he who should argue by the hour to prove absurd the feeling excited by Rome, would not be able to defend himself from full participation in it, if, in the middle of his argument, he caught the first glimpse of the dome of Saint Peter's.

With so contradictory and inconsistent an animal as man, the very incongruities I have mentioned, do but increase the excitement, and heighten the effect. There is nothing like unto Rome after all. Even to those who have no cherished recollections of its former state—to whom the first page of the Latin Grammar is beyond their *ultima Thule* of classic lore—to those whose only pursuit is amusement—Rome possesses peculiar attractions. In the morning, it is pleasanter far to feast one's eyes on the choicest collections of the *beau idéal*, left in the immortal galleries of genius, than to sit in a club-

room, spelling over the dull realities of the day. At night, it is sweeter far to see the silver moon, with her uncertain light, partially illumining the beautifully broken outlines of the Coliseum, than to catch the angular glare of painted lamps, through the dense and dizzying vapours of Vauxhall.—The eye can no more hesitate in its choice, than can the ear between the marrow-bones and cleavers of London, and the vespers of Saint Peter's.

But, of all the delights of Rome, that which afterwards leaves the most cherished recollection is the genial glow which climate, or some other indefinable cause, here throws over society. Here cold reserve melts away, political prejudices are softened, all the kindlier feelings are cultivated, and intimacy spontaneously ripens.

This was delightful to Matilda, who was peculiarly formed to be the ornament of a select circle.—Since her marriage, with the exception of the short *séjour* at Milan and Geneva, she had only alternately exchanged the vortex of London, for the cheerless languor of an unsocial domestic *ménage*. Here, however, she found herself surrounded by admiring companions, who were free alike from the two extremes

of inactive *ennui*, or restless care, which hold divided empire over London society. Here were principally found persons of cultivated minds, who seemed united upon the principle of avoiding every topic which could be subject of annoyance to themselves, or each other; and who, skimming over the surface of life alone, found every where around them subjects of interest, which their refined taste enabled them fully to appreciate.

In such a society, the arrival of so gifted an individual as Lady Matilda Dornton, could not be viewed with indifference; and her house soon became the never-failing point of attraction for the evening *coterie;* though this preference was put to a severe test for Anglo-Romans, by Sir James, whose dignity required a larger mansion than could be found in the immediate vicinity of the Piazza di Spagna, which is the English quarter at Rome. He therefore had taken a large Palazzo in a distant part of the town; and hither the *élite* of English society nightly migrated, to pay their adoration at the shrine of their new divinity.

Nightly was Matilda's *salon* filled with all that was most distinguished then in Rome; not,

as at a London rout, stuffed and choaked like an overgrown American forest, but more like a pleasure ground, where the most favoured productions of every climate were carefully disposed to the greatest advantage.

One, however, there was constantly there, as a matter of course, whom Matilda could well have spared. The reader may recollect a certain Mrs. Mechlin, who was mentioned as a constant inmate at the late Lord Wakefield's, and who had been mainly instrumental in promoting the marriage between Lady Matilda and Sir James; to effect which, she had not been very scrupulous in her assertions with regard to Lord Ormsby. Recent circumstances having given Matilda more accurate insight into the real state of the case upon that subject, it is not to be supposed that she felt very grateful to Mrs. Mechlin for her conduct upon that occasion. But still she had known Matilda from childhood. She might, too, have been mistaken herself, in what she had positively asserted. She was also supposed to be very much straitened in her circumstances. All this induced the kind heart of our heroine, to give her, upon her unexpected arrival at

Rome, a much warmer welcome than she deserved.

Mrs. Mechlin had undertaken the journey, determined that the absence of Matilda from England should not be the means of depriving her, for a whole year, of all the advantages in society, which she meant to appropriate to herself, from the splendid marriage, of which she considered herself in a great part the authoress. How she had contrived to effect so long and expensive a journey, remained a mystery; as it was well known that it was only by extraordinary expedients, and by annual dependent visits for ten months out of every twelve, that she contrived to keep up appearances in London for the other two. In fact, she was obliged to connect the end of one June to the beginning of the next May, with a long string of country cousins, in order to make both ends meet. She therefore rather suggested, than accepted the offer, of making the Dorntons' palazzo her home, during her stay in Rome.

Sir James, who was always open to flattery, was easily taken with her winning ways, and she soon became an immense favourite with him;

the advantages of which favour she knew full well how to turn to the best account. Matilda, on her part, certainly did not renew the intimacy with her former friend, with exactly the feelings towards her, which in early youth she had entertained. She was, it is true, almost angry with herself for distrusting her; but though Mrs. Mechlin was always particularly observant of all the outward appearances of propriety, still now that Matilda had acquired more knowledge of the world than she had then possessed, she could not help having her doubts as to the correctness of the conduct of her somewhat *passée*, but still showy-looking friend. Nor, indeed, upon reflecting on several circumstances which had made little impression at the time, could she think that her intimacy with Lord Wakefield had been entirely above suspicion.

Still the fascinating manners, and easy lively conversation of Mrs. Mechlin, made her by no means an unwelcome addition to any small society.

One evening, about a fortnight after the Dorntons had established themselves in their palazzo, the usual self-invited inmates had made up the evening party; for "circle" I will not call it, as *that* implies form, all of which was

absent. It was a constellation of beauty and talent, where shone many a social star, brilliant in its own sphere, yet gladly revolving round our heroine, when within the orb of her superior attraction. Here too, were mingled, in easy, and even friendly conversation, the banished Constitutionalist from Cadiz, and the willing slave from the Crimea,—all alike anxious to forget every thing that was distant and disagreeable, in the pleasure that was present.

On a fauteuil, drawn close to the sofa, where were seated Matilda and Mrs. Mechlin, was posted our friend Colonel Canteen, the male gossip of Geneva, who had arrived the day before. One of the first subjects of conversation he chose, was, " I wonder, Lady Matilda, what has become of Ormsby? I have not seen any thing of him since his apparition at Geneva. To be sure, I have not been in the way of knowing much, for I came *viâ* Genoa and Florence; and Tynte chose to delay us a fortnight at Lerici, by catching a fever in sketching the Bay. I was, indeed, most properly bored there, though I must say the fish in the Gulf of La Spezzia is quite particular. But where Ormsby has hid himself all this time, I can't conceive."

"We saw Lord Ormsby frequently at Milan," said Matilda.

"Well—I wish he would drop in upon us here some of these days," said the Colonel, "and give us the light of his countenance in not quite such a Will-o'-the-Wisp style as he did at Geneva."

"I can't say I think," said Mrs. Mechlin, "that Lord Ormsby would be any improvement to our party. He is no great favourite of mine. His whole life has been too much in the Will-o'-the-Wisp style, as you are pleased to call it. He once hung out his deceitful lights on much too serious an occasion," looking attentively at Matilda as she spoke. "I don't soon forgive those who wrong my friends. I should be very sorry to see him."

Hardly had Mrs. Mechlin concluded, when the door opened, and the Roman Servitore di Piazza having attempted something which he meant for an English name, but which might as well have been wild Indian, the object of the late conversation himself entered.

Matilda advanced to meet him, not with indifference certainly, not perhaps without a struggle with inward emotion, but with little apparent

embarrassment of manner. The usual inquiries produced the necessary replies, that he had arrived that afternoon, had inquired her residence, and hastened to pay his respects; any further conversation between them, which might have been rendered awkward by the eyes of all being inquiringly directed towards the stranger, was for the moment interrupted by Mrs. Mechlin, with her sweetest smile;—

"Dear Lord Ormsby, I am delighted to see you! what a time it is since we met! I am so glad to see you again."

Nor was this warmth entirely assumed, though so completely at variance with the sentiments we have just heard her utter. It was, as she said, long since they had met, and she could not help at once feeling that he was looking uncommonly handsome; and any woman who, like Mrs. Mechlin, retained all her former greedy appetite for admiration, with an increasing fear that she might soon be put on short commons in that particular, must be naturally eager to assert an early claim to a share of the fresh food for conquest that had just arrived.

Matilda's manner towards Ormsby during the rest of the evening was in no respect sufficiently

marked to be observable by indifferent spectators, but was felt by him to be studiously colder, and more constrained, than it would have been to a common acquaintance, who had in the same manner unexpectedly arrived. This forced reserve,—the most truly feminine, and at the same time the most unequivocal, if not the most obtrusive mark of increasing interest, more especially where a sense of duty is struggling with irresistible impulse, is, it is strange to say, almost always misconstrued by the man who is the object of it; and such was the mistaken impression received by Ormsby, who left Matilda that evening, with the conviction that he was avoided from indifference, and half muttering between his teeth something about "cold unfeeling coquette," as, with a vague indefinite feeling of universal jealousy, he recalled the unmeaning smile of one man, the affected hand-shaking of a second, the studied compliment of a third, and the evident admiration of all.

CHAPTER XIX.

After passing a sleepless night, in ingeniously tormenting himself with the idea that Matilda had too plainly shewn by her manner that she never wished to see him again, Ormsby, nevertheless, rose sooner than if he had slept soundly; and, earlier than even a certain welcome would have justified a morning visit, he found himself threading the somewhat intricate streets which separated his lodging in the Piazza di Spagna from the palazzo, which latter, as we have before stated, was in a distant part of the town.

Utterly unconscious of whom he met, or what he saw, he had almost arrived at his journey's end, when he was suddenly stopped by Sir James Dornton, who was sallying forth thus early on business.

"Delighted to see you, my dear Lord," he began; "very good of you to do me the honour of a call last night,—very sorry that I happened to have gone to the opera with Baron Joulterdolt the

Hanoverian. I have several things I wished to talk to your Lordship about. Perhaps you would have no objection just to step this way. I was going to the gunsmith's close by for a minute." Lord Ormsby hesitated a moment.—This was not at all the sort of expedition which had induced him to come out so early; and he began an excuse, "Why, I was just intending,"—when a certain inward consciousness prevented his owning to Sir James that he had been meditating a visit to Matilda. He therefore turned to accompany the Baronet.

Upon what trivial, and apparently inconsequent circumstances do the most important events sometimes seem to have depended! The heedless choice between two indifferent alternations, seems afterwards to have determined the fate of Ormsby and Matilda.

Sir James was one of those, who, upon setting out on a tour of Italy, had thought it necessary to provide himself with a pair of Manton's hair-trigger pistols, calculated to take the most infallible aim at the most minute mark, as an appropriate defence against a whole population of brigands, who, if they attack at all, always pop at you on all sides from behind stone walls,

without ever shewing themselves. However, Sir James felt quite safe with his pocket protectors; and, one being a little out of order, he had been very uneasy till it should be mended. He had therefore himself taken them to a neighbouring gunsmith and sword maker, who had the reputation of also furnishing arms to his enemies, the brigands, upon a much more wholesale scale; though this of course was unknown to the Baronet.

Sir James was pretty well versed in that *patois* of good society in England, which is called French; but of Italian he knew not one syllable, and seemed perfectly satisfied with his ignorance. It is not therefore to be wondered at that this circumstance, joined to a natural confusion in the mode of expressing himself, rendered the directions with which he had left his pistols perfectly unintelligible to the Roman shopkeeper. But as there is nothing to which an Italian will not assent for the sake of a job, he had received all Sir James's incomprehensible orders with an "*Ah! capisco bene, eccellenza—non pense—sì Signore—non c'è dubbio,*" *&c.* Accordingly, the pistols had been left there in perfect security that all that was wanted would be done; and to reclaim them was

the object of the present visit. At the commencement of the scene which ensued, Lord Ormsby remained at the outer door, with his back to the shop, his eyes unconsciously fixed on the only corner of the palazzo which was visible from thence; his thoughts wandering still further from what was passing around him. He was therefore no witness to Sir James's indignation, when the shopkeeper, with a self-satisfied "*Eccole,*" presented him with what had been his pistols, now hardly to be recognised;—the unrivalled beauties of Manton's best workmanship having been contaminated by a forced *mésalliance* with the Roman's own clumsy handicraft.

After Sir James had vented his complaints in mingled French and English execrations, all of which the Italian bore with imperturbable complacency (a calmness probably induced by the certain expectation of the concluding question of his customer), in despair he was at length obliged to inquire, "*Combien?*" This was probably the only word of French of which the shopkeeper had an intuitive knowledge; and he immediately replied, with characteristic impu-

dence, "*Ah, come vuole—niente—solamente dieci scudi.*"

"What the Devil!" said Sir James, in irrestrainable English.

"*Dieci*," repeated the Italian, holding up all the fingers of both hands in pantomimic explanation.

Sir James, who, from the increasing difficulty of communication, began to think "action much better than speech," now seized hold of one of the pistols, by way of having possession on his side of the dispute.

"*Ah! questi no*," said the Italian, retaining the butt end in his grasp.

Sir James's temper, which was none of the most enduring, was completely overset by this resistance, and having got undisputed hold of the other pistol, he dealt a stunning blow with the butt end on the skull of his antagonist. This rash act attracted the attention of another party, a wild-looking savage mountaineer, a brother of the shopkeeper, who had hitherto remained in the back of the *bottega*, occupied most inopportunely in polishing and sharpening a courier's *couteau de chasse*, which had been left for that

purpose. He was one of those "Children of the Sun, with whom revenge is virtue;" and here was a case in which the indulgence of that passion was more the effect of spirit-boiling temperament, of veins effervescent of liquid fire, than the cold-blooded and calculating instance given by the dramatist, whose sentence I quoted.

The first object that caught Lord Ormsby's glance, when, roused by the noise, he turned suddenly round, was this infuriated being, in the act of rushing forward,—the deadly weapon in his hand, as, newly polished, it glittered in the sun, but yielded in brilliancy to the flash of his fiery eye. Already had he seized his victim, and a single second would have closed for ever Sir James's earthly career, when the arm which was in the act of descending was suddenly checked with a strong shock, and fell powerless beneath Ormsby's vigorous grasp.

The ruffian immediately closed with his new antagonist; and, as Ormsby was collecting his strength to hurl him indignantly away, the assassin changed his hand, shortened his hold of the weapon, and twice stabbed him in the side. Our hero grasped him convulsively for a moment, and then as involuntarily relaxing his hold, tottered

and fell without a groan on the floor, which was soon flooded with his blood.

Whilst the first impulse of Sir James was of course to rush towards Lord Ormsby, the ruffian took advantage of that opportunity to escape.

Our hero's case seemed desperate. From a faint struggle at respiration it was evident that he still breathed; but it seemed impossible but that life must issue in the stream which continued to flow in torrents from his wounds. At this moment the courier, whose knife had been used as the murderous instrument, happened to enter the shop to reclaim it, and being recognised by Sir James as our friend Pierre, he was eagerly applied to for assistance by the Baronet; whose presence of mind had completely abandoned him in this sudden crisis.

Pierre possessing that sort of smattering of surgery which many of his profession have, succeeded to a certain degree in staunching for a moment the wounds; when he suggested the propriety of removing him if possible at once, and even before the arrival of the surgeon. To carry him home to the *Piazza di Spagna* was impossible, from the distance. "To my house, to my house next door," said Sir James; and

leaving the courier to superintend the removal, he determined at once to set off to the police to give the information that might be necessary for the apprehension of the culprit, without its ever occurring to him, that it might be as well first to prepare Lady Matilda for the unexpected shock of seeing a dying man brought to her house.

Matilda had risen that morning, internally satisfied with her own conduct, yet in spite of herself gratified at the certainty of seeing Ormsby. Notwithstanding all her cause for care, her natural buoyancy of spirit played upon her sunshiny countenance, as she lightly bounded down one of two parallel flights of the marble stairs, which, divided by a wall, led from her apartments to the court below. At that moment the melancholy procession, headed by Pierre, was ascending the lower flight, with their apparently lifeless burthen; and on reaching the central landing-place, such was the heart-rending revulsive shock Matilda was fated to receive.

No words can describe the peculiar and protracted sound of her agonizing scream. Even the base rabble who assisted in bearing the body, groaned in sympathy as they felt it thrill through

their veins. It had the power, too,—(far beyond the utmost effort of surgical skill, or physical art,) to dispel for a moment the death-like lethargy of its bleeding object. His livid lips faintly quivered, and for an instant he half unclosed his glassy eye, as Matilda sunk senseless by his side.

When the surgeon who had been sent for had dressed Lord Ormsby's wounds, and went to Matilda to intimate that all hope was not completely lost, he found her gradually recovering the shock she had received; but there was still such a wildness in her manner, as she resolutely demanded to see his patient, that, as Sir James was not at home, and there was nobody who had any right to controul her, the medical man did not feel himself authorised to refuse.

Upon entering the apartment, taking Ormby's cold and clammy hand within hers, and fixedly gazing on his motionless features, she resisted all attempts at removal, with an unvarying repetition of "No, no, not yet:" so that upon the revival of nature's efforts, when he shewed signs of returning animation, his eyes first opened on that loved form whose beauteous grief betrayed an intensity of interest, the inestimable knowledge

of which he felt cheaply purchased at the price he was then paying for it.

Whether in virtue of this "medicine for a mind diseased," or his natural strength of bodily constitution, the surgeon before he left him made an unexpectedly favourable report; upon receiving which, all Matilda's sense of propriety returned; she consigned the care of him to a more appropriate nurse; and had retired from the room before her husband came home from his long and unsatisfactory search after justice.

CHAPTER XX.

We have of late, gentle reader, rather dropped the acquaintance of the Hobson family. But though it would be hard to expect, now that you are better acquainted with their characters, that you should submit to continuing on an intimate footing with them, yet they are too nearly connected with one, in whose fate I am particularly anxious that you should be interested, for me to allow you altogether to cut them.

On the morning in which you were first made acquainted with their arrival in Rome, by the interference of their *courier Pierre*, in the gunsmith's shop, the female members of the Hobson family were, as usual, assembled in rather a dark, dingy-looking *salone* of an old-fashioned palazzo, — armed with netting-needles, paper, cutting scissars, tambour-frames, and sundry other ancient and primitive weapons, generally employed in all amazonian attempts to kill time. But old Father Time made a very good fight of

it with them; and they had already shewn, by sundry yawns, how much, in spite of all their efforts, they felt his power, when they were relieved by the arrival of two auxiliaries, who had of late frequently been very useful in enabling them to get the better of a troublesome half hour or two.—These were our Milan acquaintances, the Rev. Mr. Simperton, and his pupil, young Squire Woodhead. Mr. Simperton, as has been hinted before, was very anxious to cultivate the intimacy of the Hobson family; which fact must now be explained to have arisen from its having occurred to him that a wife with twenty thousand pounds, would be a very pretty addition to his present income, arising from a small college living, the tithes of which he considered as quite inadequate, even to wash his surplice and buy his sermon. This gilding of the matrimonial pill, reconciled him to swallowing even such a bouncing bolus as Miss Betty Hobson.

But could he also persuade his pupil to pay due homage to the charms of the younger sister, Miss Anne, what prospects might then be open to him!—In meditating on this, indistinct visions floated before his eyes, in which were

traced the festive board at Woodhead Hall, at the bottom of which, he was himself bending over a well-filled tureen, with a bottle of iced champagne at his right hand. Then he saw himself on a picked hunter, in the hunt uniform, of a clerical colour, and the buttons cut in horn. More remotely, but still contingent on the connexion, he thought he felt his buck-skin breeches covered with a short black apron, and his thin waving locks concealed under a snug bush wig.

With such anticipations, it is not to be wondered at, that, on their way to the Hobsons that morning, he had exerted all his eloquence to persuade his docile pupil, that he ought to (what is called) pop the question to Miss Anne Hobson. He had reason to think, too, that his success had been complete; and indeed, so far as a complete acquiescence on the part of his docile pupil, in the propriety of his immediately making his proposals, so it had. But this was easier said than done; or rather, it was easier thought than said; for Mr. Woodhead had the misfortune to be a very shy man; and though there was nothing very appalling in the appearance of Miss Anne Hobson, yet there is a certain artificial awe, with which even the boldest of

men, for the time, regard her whom they are about to invest with the power of refusing them.

Circumstances were, however, rather favourable to the recovery of Mr. Woodhead's self-possession. Mrs. Hobson was generally the most *désœuvrée* of the party; as, after the bustle of travelling had subsided, she found much fewer congenial occupations at Rome than at Manchester, and had already begun inflicting upon her family her daily dose of habitual wonderment about trifles;—"I wonder why it never snows here!" "I wonder when the Pope will die!" "I wonder where the letters are!"

This species of unimportant admiration, furnishing very constant employment to those who have little either to do or to think about, had at length left Mrs. Hobson nothing else to wonder about, but where Mr. Hobson could be? She had accordingly quitted the room to investigate that important matter, and Mr. Simperton had been received by Miss Hobson, with that pretty playful petulance, which is traditional among all boarding-school Misses, as the proper purgatory with which they ought to torment an anxious admirer. This he had submitted to with the prescribed patience of an humble suitor, and to

such unfounded attacks as—" Indeed, I don't know whether I ought to speak to you at all, when you cut me dead at Duchess Torlonia's last night. I saw you, Sir, Philandering away."

In vain, for some time, did the Reverend Philander protest against so unfounded an imputation, till the young lady, thinking that she had tormented him the legitimate length of time, according to the most recent marble-covered maxims of the Minerva press, he was again reinstated in favour, and they retired to the window, where they leant out, in conversation, leaving Mr. Woodhead to vent his feelings, perfectly unrestrained by interruption. But it was in vain that the latter gentleman attempted to begin; nor did Miss Anne, who was, notoriously, the silent one of the family, at all assist his embarrassment. He sat on the edge of the sofa, looking out of the corners of his heavy, lack-lustre eyes, at the monotonous movements of his mistress's netting-needle; till, at length, from behind a well-rolled pocket-handkerchief, which he had stuffed almost into the cavity of his open mouth, he mumbled, " It is very warm, Miss Anne."

" Very,"—sharply retorted the young lady.

" It is warmer here than in Cheshire," after a pause, he resumed.

" Is it ?" said she.

" You never were in Cheshire, were you ?" inquired the lover.

" Stockport's Cheshire, Sir ?" said Miss Anne.

" Oh ! but that's not like my Cheshire," said the young gentleman, with more animation.—" Now, I wish—I should be very glad—I should like very much—I—if—"

This sounded a little like coming to the point, though Cheshire did not seem the obvious short-cut to it. But, as yet, Miss Anne was fated to continue in ignorance as to " what he wished—what he should be very glad of—what he should like very much ;"—for, at this interesting moment, the squire was interrupted by the entrance of Tom Hobson, evidently in great tribulation.

" Here's a rare go ! By Jingo, this is a pretty country to live in !"

" What's the matter?" said the couple on the sofa.—" What's the matter?"—echoed the couple from the window.

" Matter !—blow me tight !—why we're all going to be murdered; and half of us are already."

At this awful announcement, the ladies gave something between a squeak and a scream; and the gentlemen asking for further information, Tom continued,—"Why, Lord Ormsby and uncle Dornton have been attacked by banditti in disguise, here in the very town; and they've settled my Lord's job for him; and uncle's very bad indeed; and if Pierre had not killed two with his own hand (I saw his knife all bloody,) they were going to have murdered all the English they could find."

"But is any body really dead?" said Simperton, who thought that he could detect something like exaggeration in Tom's confused account.

"Oh! yes; I'm sure Lord Ormsby's dead; for I joined some gentlemen that were talking about it; and Sir George Dowercourt, that used to ride about with my Lord, at Milan, was saying how the barony and the estates all went to Miss Arlingford; and what a great catch she would be."

This interruption of Woodhead's *tête-à-tête*, as may be expected, put to flight the few scattered ideas that it had cost him such pains to collect; and postponed, for the present, his proposals to Miss Anne Hobson.

It will suffice to inform the reader, without detaining him longer in their society, that, a very few days afterwards, these proposals were brought to a successful issue. The *locale*, at length chosen by Woodhead, was a singular one. It was in that octagon closet of the Vatican, appropriated to the Apollo Belvidere, that the Squire told his tale of love, in strains which certainly shewed no symptoms of having been inspired by the divine influence of the presence of the god of poetry; and there, whilst averting her eyes from that master-piece of manly beauty, Miss Anne Hobson cast a tender assenting leer on the clumsy, cart-horse carcase of her future husband. A few days afterwards, the Rev. Mr. Simperton, with a proper Protestant disregard of the Popish mummery around him, took the opportunity of the Vespers of Saint Peter's, to offer his vows at the shrine of Miss Betty Hobson; which, being most graciously received, the double union was arranged to his heart's content.

CHAPTER XXI.

For many days, Lord Ormsby's condition continued to be one of extreme danger.—The struggle was long and doubtful, between an excellent constitution, and wounds which in most cases would have been decidedly fatal.

It was also no small aggravation to Matilda's misery under this protracted suspense, that she was doomed every day after dinner to hear her husband and Mrs. Mechlin discussing, with the utmost *sang froid*, the chance of his ultimate recovery;—Sir James illustrating with scraps of superficial medical science his own opinion, that nothing but a miracle could save him;—and Mrs. Mechlin carrying her speculations still farther into futurity, by wondering, if he died, who would marry Miss Arlingford, and regretting that Lady Ormsby was not exactly the mother calculated to shew her off to the best advantage.

Upon the first day after the dreadful event, an express had been sent off for Lady Ormsby

and Emily, who were still at Geneva, having been detained there by the opinion of Lady Ormsby's physicians, that the air of Italy, particularly in the summer, would be very injurious to her health, though little doubt was entertained that, immediately on the receipt of this intelligence, they would hasten to watch over the fate of their beloved Augustus. Distance, however, interposed an unavoidable delay; and, in the mean time, the patient's case had taken a favourable turn; and though dreadfully weakened, and presenting but the shadow of the fine manly form which so lately shone conspicuous, in all the pride and plenitude of youth and health, yet he was now able to be moved on a sofa into the next apartment, which happened to be the one previously used as Matilda's morning room.

Sir James had by this time begun to be rather bored by staying so much at home as he had thought it right to do during the period of Ormsby's extreme danger; and he now became impatient to continue the regular routine of sight-seeing, which had been interrupted; and in this desire he was warmly seconded by Mrs. Mechlin, who was constantly rising in favour with him, as she continued to administer daily increasing doses

of flattery, in a shape more undisguised than she would at first have ventured upon, till she had well ascertained how little fastidious his taste was for any thing in that line.

As Sir James could not but be aware, that leaving Lord Ormsby entirely alone, in his present state, would be the height of inhospitality, and, under the circumstances of the case—of ingratitude, the expedient that naturally occurred to him and his female friend was, that Matilda should remain at home with him.—This at first our heroine opposed, from a feeling that it might appear odd in the eyes of the world, and that it certainly was incorrect in itself; yet, at length, a little piqued by her former friend, Mrs. Mechlin, in the sweetest manner, but at the same time pretty plainly giving her to understand, that they could do just as well without her; and not a little touched by Ormsby's helpless condition, she became involuntarily engaged in the daily exercise of all the endearing offices and tender attentions of a kind-hearted female, towards one whom, she discovered to her cost, sickness and suffering had only invested with a stronger interest, and rendered more than ever dangerous.

This had continued for some days, when Lady

Ormsby and Emily arrived, long after the dreaded crisis was happily past, and when our hero was slowly but certainly recovering; having travelled as quickly as the distance allowed, and much more expeditiously than the state of Lady Ormsby's health rendered at all prudent.

When relieved from the painful suspense in which she had been absorbed on the journey, she felt severely for some days the effect of over-exertion; and during that time, of course, Ormsby was not deprived of the attendance of his former nurse. But when Lady Ormsby was again restored by rest and ease of mind, she became anxious that Emily should make the most of the short time that she remained in Rome, to see all those sights which she might not for a long while have another opportunity of visiting, as the physicians were unanimous in opinion that she must herself leave Rome, and travel northwards before the warm weather set in. However attractive, therefore, Matilda's daily attendance had now become to her, she could no longer avoid abandoning it in a great degree to Lady Ormsby's more appropriate care, in order that she might herself accompany her young friend Emily in her morning rambles.

But though, on this account, much which would otherwise have carried conviction to Lady Ormsby's mind, as to the dangerous growth of improper feelings between her son and Matilda, was concealed from her observation, yet there was still enough, particularly in Ormsby's manner, to alarm her anxious and affectionate mind on the subject. This will be best explained by mentioning the substance of a conversation, which she introduced with Matilda on the eve of her own departure from Rome, which departure she was at length most reluctantly compelled no longer to postpone, as she felt that the increasing heat of the weather was bringing on a return of her old complaint; and she knew that her life was too precious to her daughter Emily to justify any hesitation in taking all proper precautions for its prolongation.

It was that period of the afternoon, when Ormsby's still protracted debility rendered a short repose daily necessary. Emily had been induced to accompany some friends for the last time to Saint Peter's; whilst Lady Ormsby and Matilda were left alone together. Lady Ormsby had dropped her work, and was looking at Matilda with an expression of intense interest,

which at length excited our heroine's attention, who, tenderly kissing her respected friend's anxiously contracted brow, said, "Dear Lady Ormsby, why look so piteously on me? reproachfully I had almost said, only that I feel I have done nothing to deserve it; and I am sure that reproach undeserved never escapes even in look from you."

"In those," said Lady Ormsby, "who feel a mother's care, without a mother's privilege, the eye will sometimes hint a fear, when the tongue dares not express a warning."

"Now I am sure," said Matilda, "that though unconsciously, I have done something wrong, something, I am afraid, to prevent your loving me as you once did, or you would not hesitate to tell me of it; for all the good I ever learnt (little enough, alas!) came from you."

"My own Matilda, never can I love you less; nor can my only daughter ever be dearer to me. The subject at which I hinted, and all the difficulties and delicacies of which for your sake I will brave, is one which to me more than any other person in the world is most difficult—most delicate. True, I was formerly your only monitress; and you still retain too grateful a

recollection of my early services in that respect: for though I have nothing to reproach myself with in the principles I then inculcated, yet was I much to blame in some of the indulgences I then allowed in practice. I did it for the best; but, unconsciously, selfishness was, perhaps, at the bottom of my conduct. It was the darling wish of my heart, that in my declining years I might see two beings, almost equally dear to me, and who appeared formed for each other, happily united."

Matilda made no reply, nor even raised her fixed and downcast eye; but a few scorching tears, which chased each other down her burning cheek,—were the silent witnesses how little these feelings had been effaced from her heart."

Without pointedly remarking Matilda's emotion, Lady Ormsby affectionately pressed her hand, and continued, " In a prudential point of view, the encouragement I certainly then gave to the first appearance of a partiality, which might, as it afterwards has unhappily turned out, be the source of misery instead of bliss, was open to censure. But it may be some excuse, that I had once known the perfection of domestic happiness myself. True, the period allowed

me was brief; indeed, I had long felt that my own career was closed. Every selfish feeling of pleasure was buried with him, for whom alone I had lived. But when I saw in Augustus, his father's self revived, and in you, dear Matilda, tenfold more of personal charm and intellectual attractions than I, even in my best days had ever possessed, was it to be wondered at, that I should anxiously wish to have my old age cheered by the reflected happiness of those so dear to me? But why should I refer to those times, which are better forgotten, as they can never be recalled?"

"Oh, no!—for heaven's sake talk on," said Matilda; "let me, if possible, live them over again in thought. They are all of happiness I shall ever know."

"No, my dear child," said Lady Ormsby; "it was with very different intentions than to revive useless repinings, that I have ventured to speak to you on this subject, which, as I said before, I do with the greatest difficulty. God knows how I love Augustus, and what pain it has always given me to thwart him, even in trifles.—With what pride, too, could I now retail his just praises by the hour!—I feel, that

your presence has preserved his life. I also feel, that your loss might end it. And yet, I am compelled to tell you, that you ought to part."

"Oh! no, dear Lady Ormsby," said Matilda; "Why must we part? I am sure, that not a word has ever passed between us, that you might not yourself have heard—not a sentiment you could have disapproved."

"Ask your heart," said Lady Ormsby, "if you may venture so to vouch for its feelings. As yet, you are innocent in word and deed; but are you so in thought? Does not this excessive unwillingness to part, itself prove that there is one for whom you are indulging a preference inconsistent with your duties as a wife."

"A wife!" said Matilda; "Yes, I am a wife; and all I have suffered, all I ever shall suffer, is a just punishment upon one, who, having loved Augustus Arlingford, could ever marry another. Forgive me, dearest Lady Ormsby," said she, checking herself; "it is very wrong of me to talk thus. I do not mean to complain of the consequences of my own folly; but you know not all I endured before I could be brought to be false to Augustus—to

myself.—The artful incidental confirmations of his pretended fickleness—the offended presence of my only relation—the absence of any real friend—and the insidious persuasions of one who then wore the semblance of friendship, and in whom I then implicitly confided;—all these —— but why," continued she, after a pause, "why should I attempt to extenuate my infatuation?—Excuse, indeed, it is worse than none,—that I then knew not the real character of him to whom I have tied myself for life; for, whatever his merit might have been, I now feel that I should still have lived to regret a fate, of which the blame, as well as misery, must rest with myself."

"Not entirely," resumed Lady Ormsby; "those who first neglected, and then perverted such a charge, have much to answer for. I do not underrate the difficulties in which you were placed during my unlucky absence from the country. I only regret that the choice you inadvertently made, should be one which has increased, a hundred fold, those difficulties. But why dwell on this part of the unhappy subject? What I am anxious that you should be made aware of, and my chief inducement for venturing to talk with you on the subject at all, is, that even

in such a cheerless lot as yours, there are consolations to be looked for, in the serene evening of life, from higher sources than those of this world. I never like to speak of myself; and it is most of all painful to do so on the subject which I am now about to mention to you: but I, too, have had my trials, though they were very different, and, I will own, (which is much for me to do,) very inferior to yours. Yet, through them all, I was supported by the strength of early religious impressions. You must have heard that I was, when very young, married to poor Ormsby. He was then the gayest of the gay. No man more *recherché*, but no man more libelled. He was called a *vaurien*,—a *roué*,—and every thing that was dissipated and unsteady. You may imagine, that my marriage with him was much disapproved by all the more serious part of my family; but I had confidence in his affection; was my own mistress; and consented to become his wife. To say that he never gave me uneasiness, would be to conceal the truth. Had I taken the line that would have been prescribed by some over-rigid moralists, I should never have possessed any influence over him, and his preference would probably have perished with

the first transport of his passion. But I entered into all his tastes and pursuits, without ever neglecting any of my own more serious duties; till I gradually obtained his confidence, and succeeded in shewing him, that it was not incompatible to be at once both gay and good. At length, upon religious subjects, his mind gradually assumed a more healthy tone; and when, in the hey-day of happiness, a cruel fever deprived me suddenly of his adored presence, I had, at least, the consolation of thinking, that, through my means, his mind had been as much prepared for his untimely end as any of us frail mortals can presume to pretend for ourselves, or to hope for others. This reflection, which has alone supported me through the dreary pilgrimage which succeeded to that short allowance of happiness, I again repeat, I owe to the benefits of an early religious education. This advantage was denied to you; and I own, that, when I consider the peculiar hardships of your married lot, Ormsby's impetuous passion, and your too tender hearts, I tremble for my children."

"Oh! dear Lady Ormsby," said Matilda, "think not that I can ever do any thing that can render me unworthy of you and of Emily."

" My dear affectionate child," replied Lady Ormsby, " warmly as I feel for you, and sensible as I am that your partiality for us is sincere and heartfelt, I should wish that your security rested on a *firmer* basis. It is not the approbation of any female friend, however valued, that can protect you from danger so imminent. That protection must be sought from higher sources. That your mind may be prepared to receive it, will be my constant prayer; and —"

The further admonitions of this excellent woman were here interrupted by the still feeble voice of Ormsby, summoning them to the next room, as his usual repose had been shortened by his anxiety to see as much as possible of his mother, on this her last day; which anxiety, unfortunately, prevented Lady Ormsby from having any further opportunity of renewing those exhortations, which might have been most useful to Matilda; and, therefore, with a hurried and affectionate farewell, and a heart full of too-well-founded fears, she was obliged to leave her to her fate.

CHAPTER XXII.

Too truly had Lady Ormsby foreseen the gathering dangers of Matilda's situation. As Ormsby gradually recovered, it was doubly difficult to see, unmoved, the reviving lustre of those speaking eyes, which seemed brightening only to gaze on her, or to hear without emotion the swelling tones of that melodious voice, whose restored power seemed given but to add to the fervour of his impassioned admiration. It was hard to turn from this, to the petty peevishness of him to whom alone she ought to listen with delight, or to the vacant stare of that unmeaning face on which alone she ought to look with love.

Delightful was the dream in which Ormsby and Matilda were now indulging, but of which they neither looked back to the origin, nor foresaw the end. But from this intoxicating pleasure they were soon to be awakened, by that which had latterly added to their enjoyment, but which also warned them of its end,—

namely, Ormsby's recovery; which seemed no longer to leave any excuse for his delaying to quit Sir James's palazzo, and return to his own lodging. It was settled, indeed, that he should do so, after the first airings which he was permitted to take.

This excursion it was arranged should comprise a ramble in the Pamphyli Doria Gardens, which the temptation of real spring weather induced all the party to be desirous of exploring.

Sir James, who was always impatient at being thwarted in trifles, expressing his vexation that, on so fine a day, he should have to wait for Matilda, (who had made an engagement on that morning to sit for her bust,) Mrs. Mechlin immediately suggested that Sir James, Colonel Canteen, and herself, should start at once on their rambles, and leave Lord Ormsby (who ought not to remain out so long) to call for Matilda at the sculptor's, and meet them at the Gardens.

To this Ormsby could not consent more readily than did the Baronet; and Matilda, being already from home, was not a party consulted. When Ormsby alone, therefore, attended her at the sculptor's, she certainly did not think

it necessary to volunteer any fictitious objection to an arrangement in which her opinion had never been asked. To the Pamphyli Doria therefore they went, and there they were left long to loiter alone on this, the last day which remained to them of that unrestrained intercourse in which circumstances had recently permitted them to indulge.

The time and place seemed not only peculiarly to harmonize with the state of their mutual feelings, but to be even emblematical of the deceitful dangers of their relative situation. It was one of those delicious days when Nature's self seems new; and here, on this favoured spot, whose refined solitudes are purposely elevated above the grosser cares of the lower world, its sunshiny smile tempts a lingering stay, and soothes into oblivion of all but the present pleasure. But, alas! *malaria's* deadly poison hovers in every balmy breath that whispers love, and destruction lurks beneath the budding hopes of each opening flower.

Matilda and Ormsby had lingered long near one of those lonely fountains which adorn some of the varied vistas of the Gardens. Even in his eyes she had never looked more lovely. The

simple attire to which, as best suited to a statuary's classical taste she had confined her morning's toilet, was peculiarly calculated to invest her perfect form with an almost aërial grace; whilst the tranquil indulgence of the softer feelings of her nature gave a matchless expression of tenderness to her angelic features. But as she bent her eyes towards him who occupied all her thoughts, and met his adoring gaze, she felt suddenly struck with the change which his recent severe illness had made in his fine manly beauty; and it recalled her mind from the calm enjoyment of the present moment, and enforced the recollection, of how much of their late re-union they had owed to sickness and to suffering,—how, in his sunken eye and faded cheek, the traces of the melancholy origin of their transitory pleasure were left to survive the advantages they had derived from so unwelcome a cause.

Touched with these reflections, as she leant on the marble balustrade, and shook, as she struggled for composure, her purposely-averted head, a few drops which had gathered in her full dark eye fell unbidden,—mingling, in their sullen fall, with the playful patter of the merry fountain over which she was bending.

Neither this agitation, nor the attempt to conceal it, were lost upon Ormsby; who said, as he gently pressed her hand, and leant forward so as to catch a glimpse of her still averted features, "Can Matilda seek for sympathy in her sorrows from these babbling waters, and deny her confidence to one in whom silence cannot be mistaken for insensibility?"

As, in silent reply to this, she slowly turned upon him her swimming eyes, and dropping her head on his arm, wept bitterly, Ormsby could no longer contain himself.

"Beloved Matilda," he said, "all further restraint is impossible. Think not that I can so long have beheld, unmoved, all your unmerited misery.—Can one who adores you—who feels alike the matchless power of all those blended charms whose perfect union fancy's wildest flight could not reach—can such an one bear to see your beauties wasted on a being as incapable of estimating their value as he is unworthy of retaining their precious possession? When I thought the misery of separation was all my own, in silence did I drag the oppressive load of anguish. But when I see, that whilst you are lost to one who lives but in your happiness, that happiness itself

is the daily sacrifice of circumstances which ought not and need not to have existed, I can no longer withstand that irresistible impulse, that attractive sympathy, which from earliest youth marked us for each other. Mine you must be,—mine alone —mine for ever."

"Hold, in mercy hold, Augustus," said Matilda; "it would be vain to deny that the love I once vowed to you has never been another's.—Events have been fated to revive feelings, which alas! had never been effaced;—my home, ever a cheerless one, has been by you rendered doubly dreary, for my peace of mind is broken—my self-esteem lost.—That I may not be deprived of all that is left of consolation and innocence, I feel that we must part; yes, this very hour. Leave me, in pity leave me!"

"Never," said Lord Ormsby; "our guilt, if guilt there be, rests on their heads who conspired by base unworthy arts to separate us—to separate those whose mutual vows had in all but form united them. Those bonds which hold you now, forged in falsehood, and rivetted with wanton cruelty, and for mere worldly views, can never force asunder hearts which the purest passion had previously cemented."

"Do not, dear Augustus, condescend to arguments, the shallow sophistry of which cannot deceive even my warped and willing mind. What avails it, how happy we once might have been! What is, alas! matters more. I am now the wife of another. If I cannot in spirit fulfil all the various duties of that station, I must to the letter obey the obligations I have contracted. In the guilt of their utter abandonment the world will not, and ought not, to admit fancied distinctions. Think you that I could ever endure to exchange approving smiles for scornful sneers? Little could I bear the contemptuous avoidance of the virtuous—still less the cold and forced endurance of an unfriendly family circle. Your saint-like mother, and the dear, innocent Emily, —could I bear their just reproaches—not the less cutting because clothed in kindness?—Oh, Augustus, I shame to think that we so long have parleyed on such a subject. Believe me, our only safety is in separation."

"First, one moment, hear me," said Lord Ormsby, with a violence of emotion which, flushing his cheek and sparkling in his eye, superseded for the moment all traces of recent langour. "Never can I survive such a sentence—'twould

have been but merciful to have spared me this last pang, inflicted by a conviction of that insensibility which could alone have dictated such cold calculations! Why was not the moment when I met you wounded, allowed to be my last? Why have you banished that bright vision on which my eyes could have closed in peace? Why efface the recollection of that impassioned sympathy which then endeared death itself?" "Merciful heaven!" interrupted Matilda, "this violence will kill you."

She had been checked in her attempt to leave him, by the apprehensions excited by the sight of his ungoverned passion; and her alarm increased, as she beheld the fleeting flush of excitement succeeded by a death-like paleness, and caught his hand just as the support of the balustrade alone prevented him from falling prostrate.

This sight revived her tenderness. 'Twas now impossible to leave him; and, avoiding the agitating topics which had been so hurtful, they were still seated on the grassy slope, she anxiously watching his reviving colour,—when they were seen from the terrace above by the rest of the party. The *custode* who was shewing the won-

ders of the gardens was the first to observe them; and, with that poetical feeling peculiar to the lower class of his countrymen, was struck with so appropriate a groupe in so beautiful a scene.

"*Ah, che coppia bella! sembra degna d' un tal paradiso!*" exclaimed he. "Hum! more like the first tempter, or a snake in the grass," muttered Mrs. Mechlin, as, speaking half to herself, she nevertheless directed the attention of both the Baronet and Colonel Canteen to the *tête-à-tête* on the bank below.

"What was that?" said Sir James, who, as it has been mentioned, did not understand one word of Italian. "What did the man say?"

"Oh, nothing," said Mrs. Mechlin, "only this pastoral Pistrucci was inspired by this garden of Eden to *improvvisare* a paraphrase of Milton. He has found, it seems, an Adam and Eve there:—

"The loveliest pair
That ever since in love's embraces met."

I am at best but a bad hand at a quotation.—There is something, I know, about sons and daughters, which don't signify—but

> "Under a tuft of shade, that on a green
> Stood whispering soft; by a fresh fountain side
> They sat them down."

That's appropriate enough, you must own."

"It's all d——d nonsense," said Sir James, a little sharply, and much to the astonishment of his female companion, who could not but be a little surprised at any appearance of emotion on his part, at her playful allusion to a flirtation which had long been so obvious to her scandal-seeking eyes, that she had given him credit for fashionable indifference on the subject; otherwise, though not ever partial to Lord Ormsby, nor so fond of Matilda as formerly, she would have been the last to have risked anything that might by possibility tend to an *escalandre*, which would endanger the permanence of an establishment that was so convenient to herself.

But if jealousy is sometimes "light as air," it is also as unaccountable as the wind, as to "whence it cometh." From an unintelligible calm upon the subject of Matilda's and Ormsby's intimacy, Sir James seemed suddenly as causelessly agitated by a rising storm of passion, without any apparent provocation; and, when they joined them on the green below, and he was

informed by Lady Matilda, that the invalid had suffered much from over-exertion, he could not contain himself sufficiently to return a tolerably civil answer; but, hurrying Matilda away under pretence that it was late, and they had long been looking for them, he insisted upon Mrs. Mechlin and Colonel Canteen accompanying them home in his carriage, and left Ormsby alone in the other to find his way to his solitary lodgings.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Heavily hung the hours, as Matilda, without the accustomed charm of Ormsby's society, was left a prey to Sir James's increasing peevishness, which was doubly irritating to a mind not entirely free from feelings of self-reproach as to her recent conduct. On the morning immediately succeeding the scene which was last described, being somewhat relieved by the temporary absence of Mrs. Mechlin, who was gone with a party to Frascati; she had, in the course of her solitary rambles, sought in Saint Peter's an escape from the world, and from herself.

It is just at that hour when all is bustle and business without, that these splendid solitudes are most imposing. In the interval of the pomp of fixed religious observances, nothing is heard from aisle to aisle but the muttered prayer of the lonely penitent.

I have said that Matilda's religious education had been neglected. Her family had formerly

been Catholics. Her uncle was the first who, for political purposes, had renounced the creed of his fathers. Left in early infancy to his exclusive management, she had been ostensibly brought up in the tenets of the Church of England; but, though Lord Wakefield always declaimed with the redoubled zeal of a convert upon the inseparable union of Church and State, Matilda observed, that he found in practice this union utterly incompatible; for not only did the State entirely monopolize his attention six days in every week, but even cheated the Church out of its seventh, as business was a never-failing excuse for neglecting the duties of that day.

With this example constantly before her eyes, and no better principles instilled into her mind, it is not surprising that the time Matilda had spent with her governess at her parish church had not been so profitable as it might otherwise have been.

But though, from her defective education, religious impressions were not powerful enough to operate as an effective controul upon her conduct, yet had they always strong hold upon her imagination; and she never entered this solemn sanctuary without reverential awe, nor left it

without feelings purified and chastened, and a mind elevated by salutary reflection.

Far be it from me to underrate the peculiar purity of our reformed worship, or the simplicity of its energetic eloquence,—which, disdaining alike unmeaning mystery or ostentatious mummery, trusts alone to reason and to truth.—But it may perhaps admit a doubt, whether, by thus rejecting the adventitious aid of the imagination, Protestantism may not, in avoiding scrupulously the chance of leading astray, at the same time have somewhat limited its means of persuading to right. That is a most praiseworthy practice, which collects the Protestant parish to periodical devotion and rational prayer, where every religious exercise may be tried by the test of reasoning; and where, though the congregation are carefully and devoutly attired all in their best, the Church itself is scrupulously stripped of all extraneous ornament, lest the eye should divert the mind from its abstraction. But perhaps it may not be a less acceptable sight, to behold the splendid temple of Saint Peter's, always open to the poorest and the meanest, who, without any attention to their own outward appearance, may at once lose the

consciousness of their grovelling cares, in the feeling that here, even in the centre of one of the most magnificent works of men, they may, on an equality with the highest and the proudest, in their own words, and at their own time, offer up their voluntary vows. And if the grand monuments of art around work upon the outward senses of the devotees, and the imagination should therefore have its share in exciting the feelings of religion, the want of the comparative purity of the source from whence those feelings are derived, may perhaps be compensated, by the greater numbers over whom its power may extend.

But let us return from this, perhaps unnecessary digression, and attend our heroine in her solitary ramble. As, occupied in her own reflections, she wandered round the still deserted aisles, her attention was attracted by the figure of a monk, who, in an attitude of fixed devotion, was kneeling before an altar, over which was represented the Adoration of the Magi. She hardly knew why she remarked him. There was nothing peculiar in the garb of his order. His bold determined features, and strongly-marked countenance, might be merely charac-

teristic of his country, which of course she supposed to be Italian. Yet was there an expression of suffering, not unmingled with self-reproach, which seemed to individualize the peculiar interest his appearance excited.—Little, however, was Matilda prepared for the extraordinary effect that was produced on the monk, when, as she repassed the spot where he was kneeling, his eye for the first time met hers. The change that this produced in his whole deportment, was so sudden and appalling, that she could only attribute it to insanity; and turning hastily away, she was hurrying from him, when she found, not without trepidation, that he followed her with increasing eagerness. Still greater was her surprise, when, as he approached, in a tone of earnest entreaty, he addressed her in English,—"Lady, one moment turn! Matilda, I implore you."

Though considerably alarmed, her presence of mind did not desert her, as she demanded to know what one of his order could want with her, and how he, a stranger, knew her name?

He answered, "That which I gave at yonder font, I needs must know again. Nay, more—though I grieve to speak it, Delaval is or was

your name.— Better than yourself I know you."

Matilda was perfectly bewildered at this incoherent, yet convincing manner, in which he proved he was not a perfect stranger to herself and family; and she could only reply, by inquiring when he had seen her before. " 'Tis long," answered he, " that I have in vain prayed for the blessing this hour has brought. At length my prayers are heard. If you are still as pure and free from worldly pride as when you first received the name by which I but now ventured to address you—if you are in mind as in person, as perfect a prototype of her in whose arms I last beheld you —then will the tale I have to tell enhance your happiness, whilst it mitigates my misery. But if, as much I fear"—

At this moment, the monk was interrupted by the distant chaunt of a priestly procession, which was approaching the spot where they were standing. He seemed to dread being seen engaged in a conference which was probably contrary to the rules of his order, and advancing for one moment close to Matilda, he muttered, " I dare no longer stay; but by your love of justice I conjure you, meet me here to-morrow at dusk. What your

present lot is, I know not. If there is one who as a right claims your confidence, suspend it but a few short hours, till my singular tale is told. Till to-morrow's dusk be silent, and be secret. Chasten your heart from love of pomp and pride; for I can give, and I can take away—can enrich your heart, and beggar your hand."

One lingering look he cast upon his astonished companion, as, drawing his cowl closer round his head, he was lost to her amongst the crowd which accompanied the coming procession.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Whilst Matilda slowly left the church, and indeed, during the whole of her drive homewards, she in vain endeavoured to form some probable conjecture, as to the character of the strange being with whom she seemed so unaccountably connected, or as to the nature of the communication he had promised. Sometimes she half persuaded herself that it was a maniac, who, availing himself of some accidental acquaintance with the name of herself and family, owed the rest to his own disordered imagination. But, on the other hand, the singular reserve which it has been remarked always appeared on the part of her uncle, as to any inquiry respecting the incidents of her early life, had always struck even her unsuspicious mind as extraordinary, and had served to keep alive a conviction, that there was some family secret which had been concealed from her. She therefore determined to comply with the request of the mysterious monk for

another interview; and she was still revolving in her mind the best means of effecting it at the hour he had mentioned, and without suspicion; when, upon her return home, her thoughts were diverted into another channel by the communication, on the part of Mam'selle Felicie, of another equally unexpected event.

"Oh, Miladi! of all the world, who think you shall be arrived?"—"Who, Felicie; Madame Hilas, with my gown? Have I kept her waiting?"

"Oh, no, Miladi!—of all the world, the guard of the chase, at Delaval."

"Who, pray?"

The—Bah!—the what's-you-call gamekeeper, Monsieur Boulby."

Strange as it may seem, Felicie's intelligence was literally true. Old Dick Boulby, seeing, in despair, that from the progress rapidly making in the new rail-road, the utter destruction of Delaval Park was inevitable, unless prevented by higher authority than any he had it in his power to exert, and his own snug lodge, in which he had been born, falling one of the first sacrifices to the new improvement, had formed the resolution of finding out his master and mistress, where-

ever they might be; though he had never in his life been further from Delaval Park than to the neighbouring quarter-sessions, to assist at the prosecution of a poacher. Yet, in execution of his plan, he proceeded, per coach, to London, and hearing there that Sir James was at Rome, he availed himself of the facilities for the furtherance of loco-motive propensities, provided in Piccadilly; where, with a single stroke of the pen, a traveller is booked indifferently for Naples or for Knightsbridge.

Once started, he was faithfully handed from courier to courier, like a bale of goods; and he now stood before Sir James, even as he had left Delaval Park,—a figure more strange to Roman eyes than any the carnival had produced,—in green plush jacket, red waistcoat, and corduroys: the only change his dress had undergone consisting in his cumbrous white beaver having been exchanged for a light jean travelling-cap, at the instance of his companion, the courier, whose nose the former had sorely incommoded during his uneasy slumbers.

We may pass over the first astonishment of Sir James at this unexpected arrival; and also his insinuation, that the old fool must have been

mad, to presume to trouble him at such a distance, on such a subject. At last, however, provoked at the pertinacity with which Dick Boulby argued upon the profaneness of destroying "our" old place, his master desired him, somewhat sharply, to hold his tongue.

"Haud my tongue!—Like enough I've comed all this way to haud my tongue!—Haud my tongue!—Like enough I've sit ten days, cheek by jowl with a Mounseer, mumchance, just thinking about nothing but how I'd tell you a bit of my mind, to haud my tongue at the end on't!—Lord! Lord! I thought no good would come of your taking my Lady out of old England. But even in these here outlandish parts, I've never seed any thing like that piece of work you're making in our park."

"Come, Sir," said Sir James, "if you are to be allowed to remain in my service (which is a favour you don't deserve) you must learn to treat your master with more respect."

"Remain in your service! How *can* I remain?—when you wo'nna keep your park, how can I be your park-keeper?—How can I be your game-keeper, when all't'game you'll have left will be black game, in shape of coal-carts?—

After opening lodge-gate, man and boy, these sixty years to my Lord's friends, do you think as I will take money at your toll-house?—Lord! Lord! to think how things have turned out! Ah!" added he, with a kind of despairing head-shake, "if my Lady had but married Lord Ormsby (as we all hoped,) this would never have happened."

"Lord Ormsby," said Sir James, hastily; what's that you say about Lord Ormsby?"

"Why, if you mun have the truth, when she were to ha' married Lord Ormsby (then the Honourable Augustus Arlingford,) there was'na two opinions in all the country side; auld and young were ready to shower blessings on their handsome heads. But when *you* comed, and we were all told you had plenty of pelf in your pocket, tho' we never seed ony of it, we shook our heads, and partly mistrusted how it would be."

"Do you mean," said Sir James, "that you insolent bumpkins presumed ever to suppose that Lord Ormsby was ever going to marry Lady Matilda?"

"Presumed to suppose?—I loike that. Why,

be that news to you? Why, I thought every fool knowed that."

The violence of the various emotions which this unexpected communication excited in Sir James, was too powerful for utterance, and he turned in silence away for a moment; when at the same instant, Matilda entered, and not observing the Baronet, kindly welcomed the early friend of her childhood; and the pleasure he derived from the sight of his hereditary mistress, in a moment restored the somewhat ruffled serenity of the ancient dependant.

"You must be very much fatigued with such a tremendous journey," kindly inquired Lady Matilda.

"Thank you, my Lady;—why it has made my old bones dance rarely. I doubt if I'se ever loike to get a chair to sit still wid me again. If I do but try a moment, they all go wabble-wabble, noddle-noddle, like that great leather case as I've been swinging in this week past."

Any further account of Dick Boulby's journey was suspended, by Sir James, in a voice of suppressed passion, desiring Matilda to follow him into the next room.

" So, Madam !" Sir James began ; " you have so long escaped detection that you have probably been flattering yourself there would be no end to the perfect security with which it suits you to combine the substantial advantages of my wealth and station, with the less solid sentimental pleasures of your early passion."

" Sir James," said Matilda with dignity, " I am at a loss to conceive your meaning, while thus degrading yourself by insulting me."

" Well, Madam," said Sir James, " I am content to abide by your own answer to one or two questions. Was Lord Ormsby once your accepted lover ? and if so, why was the fact concealed from me ? and what defence can you make for your late encouragement of him ?"

Matilda calmly replied, " Now that your inquiries, however the same in substance, are stripped of their offensive coarseness, I will readily answer them to the best of my power. True it is that long before I knew you, a growing partiality between Lord Ormsby and myself was encouraged by both our families. Circumstances however intervened, which put a final period to all thoughts of that connexion ; and at the earnest instance of my guardian, I was induced to

listen to your addresses. It was then my uncle's special command that no mention should be made of my previous half-formed engagement. Whether right or wrong, it certainly was in opposition to my own wish at the time that I then obeyed his orders on this point. Since our marriage I will be judged by yourself, whether you have ever encouraged those terms of unlimited confidence, which could alone justify me, at any later period, in unnecessarily reviving a subject in which not alone my own feelings were concerned, but those also of another, towards whom my conduct had not been entirely free from reproach. As to your last accusation, that of having latterly encouraged Lord Ormsby's attentions —a moment's reflection must have called to your recollection how perfectly unfounded it is—on the contrary, how studious my avoidance of him had for some time been; indeed, so much so, as to excite your own observation. And as to the circumstance which latterly led to the renewal of our intimacy,—common gratitude to him might have made you remember how little share I had in its origin."

There was a calm air of offended dignity about Matilda, as she thus answered her husband's vio-

lence, which seemed to stagger even his suspicions; and at this moment they were interrupted by the entrance of Sir James's own servant, with whom curiosity was a constitutional vice, and who, hearing this domestic storm, could not resist a desire to find out the cause, and therefore took the first opportunity to intrude himself—holding in his hand, as his excuse, the very sketch-book which Lady Matilda had missed at Geneva.

"Lord Ormsby's servant, my Lady," said he, "left this book with some other things of his Lordship's. Angelo says, it was lost that day that your Ladyship met Lord Ormsby at the villa near Geneva, and he supposes his Lordship took it by mistake."

"What?" said Sir James, almost breathless with rage,—"you met Lord Ormsby at Geneva, and never mentioned it to me? Is it so?"

"It is," said Matilda.

"Then are all my suspicions confirmed. Prepare, Madam, to leave Rome before sunrise. The horses at five o'clock, Clarke."

On this he left the apartment, and Matilda did not again see him till the carriage was at the door.

When thus left alone, that high spirit which

had supported her under the late trying scene, did not survive the necessity for its exertion; and she abandoned herself, without further effort, to all the despair which her present gloomy prospects seemed inevitably to entail. She had justly repelled the imputation of habitual and practised deceit, which Sir James's utter ignorance of her character could alone have induced him even in passion to insinuate; yet she could not deny to herself, that the suspicion of her criminal attachment was but too well founded,—feeling, as she did, that of all the circumstances which rendered this sudden and disgraceful departure from Rome odious to her, that for which alone she grieved was the separation from Ormsby.

I am anxious to dwell as little as possible on the painful details of this part of my story,—the leading events of which I shall therefore record as concisely as possible. At five the next morning, Sir James, in obstinate execution of his hastily-formed determination, hurried his unhappy wife away from Rome, regardless of the effect which such a precipitate and unexplained departure might have, in giving credit to reports injurious to her character or to his own honour; and during their tedious journey to Florence, Matilda

had to submit to every species of ill-treatment, short of actual violence, which a vulgar mind and unfeeling nature, under the irritation of supposed injury, could inflict.

As soon as Lord Ormsby discovered that the Dorntons had so abruptly quitted Rome, he madly followed; and it was just one week from their last eventful meeting in the Pamphyli Doria Gardens, that, at the conclusion of a stolen interview at the Villa Strozzi at Florence, Matilda, unable any longer to bear the barbarity of her husband, or to resist the ardour of her lover, faltered out her faint consent to an immediate elopement.

A few hours brought them to Leghorn; where they embarked for Naples; and, as the vessel receded from the shore, they felt that this speck on the surface of the waters contained all that in the wide world was left to either of them.

Thus in an unguarded moment, by this one act, had one of the most virtuous of her sex fallen from the topmost heights of rank and reputation down to the level of the most wretched outcasts from society. Born to be the representative of an ancient name and family, she was now reduced to borrow from courtesy a doubtful appel-

lation. She had exchanged the eager seeking of would-be acquaintances, for the studied avoidance of former friends; and, what alone to her sensitive mind added tenfold anguish to all these humiliations, she was doomed to feel that she deserved them.

CHAPTER XXV.

Truth compels me to admit, that that self-inflicted punishment, which is the usual concomitant of guilt, did not in this instance immediately follow Ormsby's and Matilda's fall from virtue. If this admission should be considered dangerously at variance with the strict moral doctrine on the subject, let the reader only suspend his judgment till my tale is told.

During the whole of their prosperous flight, light and buoyant as the bark that bore them were the hearts of the fugitives, and boundless as the bright expanse of sunshiny waters around seemed their happiness. At the conclusion of the voyage, they exchanged the comparative confinement and restraint of their vessel, for ever-varied rambles through the lonely environs of Sorrento; where, in that most beautiful corner of the most beautiful bay in the world, they had taken a villa for the summer. Here, whilst days untold swelled into weeks, and weeks that passed

unheeded made up months,—eternal as the smiling skies above, and fruitful as the teeming earth on which they trod, still seemed their love. But not more certain was the revolution of the seasons, than this delicious dream to have an end.

The first thing that at all awakened them, even so far as to allow either recollections or anticipations in the least to interfere with the all-engrossing present, was the receipt of a pacquet of letters, which one of their servants brought across the bay from their banker at Naples. Of these I shall transcribe two. The first was from Lady Ormsby.

"If I have so long delayed writing, it was literally that I knew not how to begin. My heart is too full to allow me to write about any thing which I do not feel, and how can I dwell on that which alone occupies my mind? If your conduct has shewn how little influence I retained, reproaches will not now restore it. If your own hearts do not tell you how much you have made me suffer, it would be no consolation to me to detail my humiliated feelings. I was a foolish vain old woman. I loved the world but for its praises of you both. If I could now, by avoiding it, escape

its sneers, the sacrifice to myself would be small indeed. But a paramount duty towards a daughter who deserves every thing from me, prevents such a step, and, at the same time, precludes me from holding open or constant communication with you whilst living as you now are. My sole object, therefore, in writing to you now is, to let you know, that in sickness or in sorrow, my children will still find an affectionate mother in

"EMILY ORMSBY."

The other letter was of a very different character. It was from Mrs. Mechlin, and dated Florence.

"My dear Matilda—How could you take so imprudent a step? You completely mistook the management of Sir James. You should have flattered—not have *brusquéed* him. With proper treatment, such a husband would have been as blind as love itself; and a husband's protection is, under any circumstances, a very great convenience. Sir James, they say here, has doubts about trying for a divorce; as, from the singular manner in which your fortune was settled, the

lawyers tell him, that he would lose it by doing so, and that he may otherwise keep it. Harry Wordsworth, who is here, as affected as ever, and making as many bad jokes, says, the Baronet is the luckiest man in the world; for that most men who marry heiresses reverse his lot—lose the land, and keep the lady. You will be glad to learn, that all the women here are ready to kill you for carrying off Ormsby, as his was a beauty *che ha fatto furore*, last time he was here. Don't mention my writing to you, my dear, as you know it might hurt me rather in the eyes of some people; and Prudence is always my motto. But you may depend upon my telling you any thing that I think will interest you. By-the-bye, long muslin sleeves are much worn. The *crépées* still continue. Harry Wordsworth says, what with stiffened locks and starched sleeves, it is hard to tell a beauty from a bishop.

"Your's ever,

"Caroline Mechlin."

The first of these letters, which was addressed to Ormsby, he was very anxious to conceal from Matilda; well knowing how much pain it would give her,—peculiarly sensitive as she would be

to any censure from one she valued so highly as Lady Ormsby. Having therefore finished his mother's letter before Matilda had spelt through Mrs. Mechlin's more illegible scrawl, he thrust it, without comment, into his pocket; and when Matilda, having at length finished her own letter, questioned him about his, he was occupied with some less interesting contents of the pacquet; the accumulated directions on whose overloaded backs proved that they had followed him from Rome to Florence, and again from Florence to Naples.

One of these was from his lawyer, stating that his interests would suffer materially, unless he could, for very particular business, return to England before Trinity Term. This, of course, was now entirely out of the question. Another was from his land agent, as to renewing leases on Lady-Day, and cutting down a wood before the sap was up; a third from a club acquaintance, giving an account of all the gossip of the gay world, and assuring him he was much missed in England; again, another from a political friend, asking his opinion as to bringing on a question of the first importance, in which he had formerly taken a leading part.

Not one of these subjects of interest could, for one moment, enter into the smallest comparison with the all-engrossing happiness he felt in possessing Matilda. But it is hard to find that man who, as a matter of abstract choice, and unhesitating preference, would willingly abandon for ever the world and all its attractions. Woman, warm-hearted, self-sacrificing woman, will often view all the manifold vicissitudes of fortune, only as reflected through the medium of one beloved object. But with man, love rarely is, and still more rarely ought to be, the sole exclusive business of life.

Ormsby had, in early youth, mingled much in the gayest and busiest scenes. All resources lose their zest upon constant repetition; but he was not one of those who mistake a temporary repletion of the pleasures of society, for a growing distaste towards them, nor had it ever entered into his contemplation to make positive vows of giving up the world. But, accident had renewed his acquaintance with Matilda, the recollection of whom he had never ceased to cherish. His first passion had been revived with all the fervour he had formerly felt in the freshness of youth. The apparent impracticability of the

pursuit, had, perhaps, contributed to the exclusive eagerness with which, sacrificing every other consideration, we have seen him devote himself to it. It is no less justice to him, than to Matilda, to say, that so far from possession having abated his love, it had but increased its ardour; and had it been their lot to have been honourably united in the eyes of the world, no matrimonial couple had ever closed even their honeymoon, much less completed, as they had now done, three whole months, with more certain symptoms of the permanence of their mutual happiness. But a woman like Matilda, who has sacrificed every thing for a man—who has rendered herself alike unfit for society, or for solitude—avoided by others, and avoiding herself,—such an unhappy female has a tie upon him for whom she has done all this, of a much stronger nature than those of common married life. A virtuous wife adorns the most brilliant lot, and is the solace of occasional retirement; but a fallen companion entails an abandonment of all the pleasures, and many of the duties, of active life. Her protector's conflicting obligations are such, that it is almost impossible for him adequately to fulfil any of

them. She must be all in all to him, or he is worse than nothing to her.

And such, as yet, had Ormsby been to Matilda. But when this pacquet of letters at once opened to him, as it were, the social budget, —shewing him all the various claims the world still had on him—the validity of which he had formerly acknowledged, and of the incompatibility of which, with his present situation, he could not but be sensible,—the serenity of his recent enjoyment, which had owed its existence to the oblivion of every thing but present happiness, was not a little disturbed.

As they pursued their usual evening stroll through the vineyards, whose ripe burthens overhung the sloping banks, and almost touched the waters, Matilda could not but remark how much absorbed he was in his own reflections; and she at length thus broke the unusually protracted silence.

"How I do hate letters! True, I hardly ever had a pleasant one. Strange as it may seem, I do not think that I ever in my life received one from you, Ormsby."

"Do you wish me to give you a speedy

opportunity of experiencing that pleasure?" said Ormsby, smiling.

"Oh! do not talk so, even in jest. I cannot bear to contemplate such a thing as possible. Besides, positive pleasure, I think, can hardly be said to be derived from the receipt of a letter. It is at best, but a slight alleviation of the pains of absence—a poor apology for the living presence. What, compared to the ever-varying sympathies of uninterrupted intercourse is it, when the heart only beats its formal and periodical response to the postman's knock? What security can we ever feel, that the interval which has elapsed before the receipt of written communications, may not have reversed all of good that they contain—that affections may not have cooled—that health may not be impaired, even whilst we are dwelling with delight upon the assurance of their continuance?"

"True," said Ormsby; "and though letters may

"Waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole,"

yet what is *such* a sigh, compared with one felt by the actual senses—distilling its rich balm

upon the heart, and breathing its low, sweet music upon the ear?"

"And if, when only written," continued Matilda, "the most endearing terms lose half their charm, how much are the reproaches of those one loves aggravated, when they thus receive a poignancy, which no affectionate look or manner interposes to soften, and a permanence which no soothing, or submission, can interfere to obliterate? The displeasure of our friends is doubly powerful on paper."

"It is indeed," said Ormsby, removing at the same time his hand from its grasp of his mother's letter, which he had still held in his pocket, doubtful whether he should shew it to Matilda.

"The odious Post," said Matilda, "enables all these most disagreeable intruders to annoy us with their sentiments, however we may succeed in excluding their persons."

"But at least," said Ormsby, "we may put an end to paper persecution, without committing murder. If a Neapolitan August do not furnish us with a fire to which we can condemn them, here, at least, are waters of oblivion for them;"

—and taking Matilda's letter, with all his own except his mother's, he scattered them in scraps into the sea; upon whose smooth unruffled surface, mingling as they fell, the frivolous flippancy of Mrs. Mechlin long floated, undistinguished from the stiff business text of the lawyer, the rounded periods of the politician, the equally diffuse dandy, and the concise, cramped communication of the country agent.

The spot on which this little incident occurred, was the loveliest of all the lovely scene around, and, for this reason, had often been the limit of their evening ramble. The beautiful banks of the little inlet, on one side of which they were seated, were crowned with a profusion of myrtles, acacias, and other sweet plants, which irresistibly tempted to linger within the precincts of the double enjoyment of their fragrant shade.—The vineyard path on the other side of the bay, traversed only by the light-hearted peasants, as they returned from their work, carolling some of the wild and gay melodies of their native dialect, gave occasional animation to the scene, without at all interfering with its secluded charm. On the broad extent of waters beyond, the

setting sun had marked his track of liquid fire, such as no pen, and the pencil only of Claude, can describe.

I know not whether it was from the peculiar stillness of the atmosphere, and the more than usually glass-like surface of the sea, (which will sometimes convey sound to an almost incredible distance,) but it was the first time Ormsby had remarked, that from hence they could catch the "busy hum of men," and the rumbling of the carriages, on the evening Promenade at Naples. There was something in his tone and manner in making this observation, which struck Matilda's sensitive mind as implying a wish to be there;—and in a moment her part was taken.—"Ormsby," she said, "you wish to change the scene.—For myself, Heaven knows with you I could remain for ever in this earthly paradise;—that is, with you wholly and entirely, in mind as well as person. But never through mistaken kindness attempt to disguise from me any desire you may have; for if *you* are but happy, all places are the same to me. I can have no wish, no hope, but to please you; and my worst fear is to be felt as a constraint on your inclinations."

Ormsby warmly protested, in reply, that he had no wish for change — that no one could be happier than he. And so at the moment he felt. But in a week they had removed to Naples!

CHAPTER XXVI.

"I NEVER can bear so public a promenade as the Villa Reale," said Matilda to Ormsby, one of the first evenings after their arrival at Naples.

"My dearest love," replied he, "let me entreat you not to take up so absurd an idea. You will distress me beyond measure, if you adopt habits of utter seclusion. It only requires a little resolution at first.—You will only have to cherish and maintain that indifference you formerly felt, for those whose prejudices may induce them to avoid you. But all whose notice you would really wish to seek, will make allowance for the peculiar circumstances in which you were involved; and in time, as my wife, I shall hope to see my Matilda restored to that society of which she is formed to be the brightest ornament. But if, on the other hand, you are resolutely bent on shutting yourself up, you will only make *me* miserable as well as yourself."

"Dear Ormsby, though I am not convinced

by your arguments, (in which I think you mistaken,) yet am I moved by the effect you threaten, and of which you alone can judge.—Make *you* miserable indeed! No, never will I hazard any thing that can tend to that.—If it must be so, to the Chiaja let us go."

Ormsby, grateful for this concession on her part, was in high spirits, and exerted himself to dissipate the awkwardness which for the first time she felt at the universal admiration her appearance excited.

The latter end of the summer, or beginning of Autumn, is perhaps the season when there are fewest English at Naples; so that they had passed from one end to the other of the promenade, without meeting many of their countrymen, or any with whose faces they were acquainted. But, on one of the benches at the further end of the walk, Ormsby discovered a figure, stretching his lazy length along, and devouring an English newspaper, which he recognised to be that of his old acquaintance Harry Wordsworth, whose arrival in Italy, it may be recollected, was notified in Mrs. Mechlin's letter to Matilda.

Harry Wordsworth was one of those, whose

universally acknowledged position in society it is extremely difficult to account for. He was the younger brother of a not very good family, with a smart figure, and pleasing, though not handsome features; in saying which, we have pretty nearly summed up all the advantages which he really possessed, though not one hundredth part of what he had successfully assumed the credit of.

He was as poor as younger brothers usually are, yet denied himself no luxury;—professed never to do any thing he did not like, yet was reckoned the best-natured creature in the world;—superficial, almost illiterate, yet could talk *ad captandum* on any subject;—in short, without much either of fancy or feeling, a rattling merry manner with men made him pass for an uncommonly pleasant fellow, and a soft insinuating address with women gave him the reputation of being only *trop aimable.*

How he came to be thus far from the scene of all his glories, and at this unfashionable time of year, we must allow him to explain for himself, as far as may be convenient to him.

Ormsby having known him all his life, and been always accustomed, as a matter of course,

to reciprocate the prescribed degree of warmth of manner upon meeting him, which was perfectly compatible with utter indifference as to ever seeing each other again, accosted him with, "Harry, how are you? what brings you here?"

At which Harry started up with, "Ormsby, my dear fellow, how goes it?" and then turning towards Lady Matilda, with whom he had a very slight acquaintance, changed his manner to his most interesting drawl, and accompanied, "delighted to see *you*," with a protracted squeeze of the hand.—Then turning again towards Ormsby, and holding up the newspaper he had been reading, "Well, Ormsby," said he, "so you are going to win the St. Leger, after all?"

"*Non capisco*," said Ormsby, "though I suppose you say that figuratively, for I know most of your metaphors are in that line."

"Figuratively?—quite the reverse—I literally speak by book; to prove which, I'll back your Comus filly against any thing."

"Come, my dear Harry, you're the first that ever brought Tattersall talk to the Villa Reale.—The fact is, that I had forgotten I possessed such a thing as a Comus filly; I have not seen

or heard any thing of her since she was running about the paddock at Ormsby. But you've excited my curiosity. What have you heard about her?"

"Only what will make a man of me again," said Harry; "that d——d Derby floored me completely. She has beat the first favourite, at York, August,—holding up the newspaper,—'Lord Ormsby's bay filly by Comus, first.—The Comus filly took the lead, made strong running, was never headed, and won easy;—two to one on Mr. Leggin's Pandemonium, who was beat early in the race.'—So Pandemonium may go to the devil. The Comus filly will bring me home again; and if she brings me home she shall take me home, and that *presto*, as they say here, you may depend upon it.—But only think of your being such an unworthy favourite of fortune as not to recollect that you had a Comus filly!—well, if she wins the Leger, you must christen her Matilda, and then you'll no longer have any excuse for forgetting her."

There was something in this last sally of Harry Wordsworth's which grated unpleasantly on the feelings of both his hearers, particularly on those of Matilda, to whom, in her present

delicate situation, the idea of her name being made a common bye-word was most odious. The fact was, that Harry Wordsworth had rattled on inconsiderately, not from positive embarrassment, for of that, at no period of his life had he ever been accused,—but from more awkwardness than he had often experienced; which arose from a certain degree of uncertainty he felt, as to how he might be received by his old friend Ormsby, owing to his having found it convenient to fix the Sunday instead of the Tuesday after the Derby, as the day of his departure for the Continent;—to which change in his original intention, some did not scruple to say, that he was impelled by a desire to avoid the intervening black Monday at Tattersall's. He had tact enough to perceive, that his free allusion to Matilda's name was not very favourably received, and therefore turning the subject, and rattling on, he continued,—

"But upon my word, Ormsby, you are getting to live so much abroad, you'll soon forget the difference between White's and Boodle's; and you'll be utterly unable either to discuss budding beauties at the one, or growing crops at the other."

"My good fellow," said Lord Ormsby, "ab-

surd as that may appear to you, I have heard some people talk about quite as important matters, which they quite as little understand.—'Tis a showy superficial age. Our ancestors' solid ingots of knowledge, too heavy for most heads to carry, we have spread out into gold-leaf gossip, which glitters over the whole surface of society."

Matilda wishing to return to her carriage, Ormsby and Wordsworth now separated; the former, upon the whole, not much pleased at the meeting. The fact was, that Harry Wordsworth's manner was one to which habit had once familiarized Ormsby; but thus unexpectedly recurring on the sudden, removed from all the associations which had conspired to render him agreeable, it left the general impression of an unwelcome intrusion.

The next morning, when Ormsby had strolled out, and Matilda was occupied with her music, Harry Wordsworth popped his black, curly head, round the partly open door, and said,—"At home, fair lady?"—in an easy, confident tone, which rather conveyed—"Here am I!" than, "are you there?"

Matilda's manner had always been one peculiarly calculated to repress impertinence; and

certainly its repulsive power was never more exerted than during the *tête-à-tête* which followed the arrival of this self-admitted visitor; but all her coldness was wasted upon the easy intruder. He lolled, by her side, upon the sofa; and whilst conversing on indifferent subjects, occasionally fixed his eyes, with an expression of undisguised admiration, upon her beautiful face; then pressed her, with hyperbolical enthusiasm, to delight him by continuing her singing; and when, rather than listen to his rhapsodical entreaties, she calmly complied, he leant over her, and passed his arm round the back of her chair, with an air of (to her) offensive familiarity.

Much of this was habitual mannerism with him; and arose from his being, what is commonly called, a cool hand. But it struck Matilda, who was previously not much acquainted with him, as personal to herself, and arising from that want of respect which was the consequence of her present situation. Bitter were the reflections which this conviction gave rise to, and so strong was their effect upon her nerves, that she had some difficulty in keeping up that appearance of composure which she was very anxious to maintain; when Ormsby's entrance relieved her

from her unpleasant situation. Wordsworth soon after departed, after having coolly invited himself to dine with them the next day.

Ormsby was evidently in high spirits. "I told you, Matilda, that there was little doubt you might, if you chose, soon be restored to society; that there was discrimination enough in the world to make allowances for your peculiar situation; and that, after the divorce, you will gradually, but generally, be received again."

"Dear Ormsby, I have seen nothing, certainly, to alter my opinion, that it will be impossible, even if I had the hardihood, to make the effort."

"Well; only let me tell you what happened to me this morning. I don't know whether I ever mentioned to you a cousin of mine—Mrs. Laceby. She is the wife of Admiral Laceby, who is commanding our fleet off the Island of ——. She is the most rigidly strict person I almost ever heard of, and is generally supposed to possess every Christian virtue but charity. She once quarrelled with my poor mother; as even she, excellent as she is, offended some of her prejudices. Well, judge of my surprise, when, upon meeting her this morning, she accosted me immediately,—said that she had only landed

yesterday from the Island of ——, and had heard, by accident, that the female part of my family were here. She hesitated a moment, and seemed to me to avoid mentioning you by name; but ended by saying, that relations ought to forget all that was past; asked me where I lived; and parted, saying that she should call here to-morrow."

"I suppose," said Matilda, "that it must have been her, then, that Mr. Wordsworth meant, when he said, he wondered how I, and my strange relation who was here, would get on together. He would not tell who she was; but laughed, and said, he had no doubt she would call upon me."

Though the character given of Mrs. Laceby was not such as to make Matilda anticipate much pleasure from her acquaintance, yet, certainly, her feelings, recently wounded by what she considered Wordsworth's impertinence, were soothed by the attention implied in her intended visit.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ormsby had engaged himself to go on the following morning to look at a house, the situation of which they thought they should prefer to that which they at present occupied. Matilda was therefore left alone to receive the expected visit of Mrs. Laceby.

From any awkward sensation of embarrassment in society, Matilda had always been peculiarly free; an exemption, the natural consequence of intuitive good breeding, and habitual usage of the world. But with her situation, her feelings had altered. Confidence, however the appearance of it may occasionally be brazened forth, cannot really exist without self-respect. Matilda's loss of caste had been too recent, and her sense of shame was too acute, to enable her successfully to assume the appearance of that ease she no longer felt; and she had literally worked herself up into the most uncomfortable state of nervousness, whilst awaiting Mrs. Laceby's dreaded

visit. Listening to catch the first sound of each successive carriage wheels, as they bowled along the smooth lava flag stones, they seemed to her to advance with unnatural rapidity; and she gave a gasp of relief, when, though hardly trusting her ears, she was convinced that each had actually passed her door.

"How can I bear to meet," thought she, "a woman whom Ormsby described as possessing every virtue, but charity; when it is only the active exercise of *that* one in particular, that could render endurable her presence to a poor fallen creature like me? I shall have to submit to the contemptuous condescension of one who, even whilst she for some family reasons stoops to notice me, will think it necessary to mark, that the interview is disagreeable to *her*, by making it so to *me*. I think I see her before me, shrinking, as from contamination, at the slightest approach on my part. I can fancy, but too well, her severe voice, stiff figure, and constrained conversation. Would it were over."

Whilst conjuring up these unpleasant images, a carriage actually stopped at the door; and after a delay that seemed interminable to Matilda, her Italian *servitore* entered, and announced a lady,

whose name, he said, he could not pronounce, but which resembled that of my lord.

"Now for it," thought she; and she rose to receive her dreaded visitor. But great was her surprise when, instead of the stiff-starched figure, and forbidding features, which she had attributed to Mrs. Laceby, she beheld a form, if any thing, too well rounded,—handsome, though rather coarse features—a complexion which, if entirely natural, was brilliant indeed—and a dress far from unbecoming—though showy, almost amounting to tawdriness.

Matilda had hardly time to make these observations on the appearance of her new acquaintance, before, instead of meeting her with a cold repulsive manner, she extended both hands, and kissed her cheek rather cordially than delicately. At first Matilda knew not, whether to distrust her own eyes, or to discredit Ormsby's descriptive powers, and was half inclined to believe that there must be some mistake: when she was reassured by her visitor, who began, "I knew that you would be at home, as soon as you heard that it was I. I was determined to call on you, because I feel for your situation; and connected as we are, I have made up my mind to take you

in hand; for however ill I may think that I have been used by your Lord Ormsby, and some of the family, forget and forgive is my motto; and if I can be of any use to you, you may command me. I will introduce you to any society that I know of, if you like."

"Oh, by no means," answered Matilda; "I neither can expect nor wish that. But I can assure you, that I am more grateful than I can express for this attention; which I am aware, however, that I can only owe to that kindly feeling towards Ormsby, which all in the remotest degree connected with him cannot but have."

"Quite the contrary, I assure you, my dear," said her visitor; "much more for your own sake than his. I have an old crow to pick with him, as well as with his old methodistical mother."

Though Matilda had been prepared to hear Mrs. Laceby speak with dislike of Lady Ormsby, from the former quarrel,—of which Augustus supposed, from her unforgiving nature, she still retained the recollection,—yet she could not help being much astonished to hear the epithet methodistical applied to such a person.

She, however, replied, "I was sorry, indeed, to hear, that you had had some differences with

Lady Ormsby, which had induced you to quarrel with *her*."

"I quarrel with her! She quarrelled with me. It was all her nonsense. Lord bless you! I'm as easy to come on with as an old glove."

At least, thought Matilda, Mrs. Laceby is not an elegant woman. Satisfied with the reputation of the higher virtues, she neglects the minor graces of society. But her manner towards me, though somewhat abrupt, is infinitely more conciliatory than I had been led to expect.

Her new acquaintance now left the chair where she had been sitting, and, throwing herself on the sofa by her, said, "What a love of a gown that is you have got on, my dear! do let me send my maid to take the pattern. I declare, it is quite killing."

Matilda opened her eyes in mute astonishment, at the idea of a notorious prude, not only choosing to seek her society, but volunteering to copy her appearance.

"Well! don't stare so, my dear, as if I had asked something very extraordinary. I don't pretend to say that I shall look so well in it as you do. Oh, now you are going to say that you meant no such thing. But I can't stay to hear

you give the lie to your countenance. I must leave you now; but I'll introduce you to all the people I live with here. I don't know many English, except a few men; but I'll make you acquainted with the Contessa Franca Vita, la Marchesa Bellocchi, and some more of my Italian friends. I have not many beaux to lose, or else I ought not to bring you into my society; for those pretty peepers, from under their long dark lashes, will play the very deuce with the men, I can tell you."

With this, and the same warm salute with which she had entered, she left the room.

"How strange and unaccountable," thought Matilda. "I have often heard, that living much abroad is supposed to bring about extraordinary changes of manner; but to this extent I could not have believed it possible. In no one respect is she as described by Ormsby, except in her rooted antipathy to Lady Ormsby. She is very disagreeable, I think, though not in the way I had expected. I had much rather have been lectured than fondled, by such a person."

When Ormsby returned, she did not dwell much upon the subject to him; as, having taken a dislike to her new acquaintance, she could not

speak of her with pleasure; and Ormsby evidently being anxious that she should cultivate the intimacy with his relation, she rather avoided the only subject on which they had differed.

Harry Wordsworth having excused himself from dining with them, as cavalierly as he had invited himself, Ormsby and Matilda, after a short repast, followed by a long evening ramble, returned home about dusk, when the servant gave Lord Ormsby a note, which, upon opening, he found to be from Mrs. Laceby, the contents of which, at first, he could not comprehend. It began:—"Mrs. Laceby presents her compliments to Lord Ormsby, and scarcely thinks it necessary to inform him, that it was from mistaking the person at present residing here, and calling herself Lady Ormsby, for the Dowager, that she was led into the error of inquiring where he lived, and promising a call. Mrs. L. makes the less apology for this strange mistake, as she is sure that Lord O.'s good sense must have prevented him from supposing for one moment that Mrs. L.'s regard for her own character could have allowed her to take any notice of the female who she now understands is at present residing under his protection."

"Whom, in the name of wonder, then, can you have seen this morning?" said Lord Ormsby, at once irritated and annoyed at the unexpected contents of this note.

"The Lady that was here this morning," said the servant, "is waiting for you upstairs in the drawing room with Mr. Wordsworth."

Lord Ormsby ran up stairs before Matilda, and, upon opening the door, found his brother's immaculate widow, Arabella Lady Ormsby, lounging familiarly on the sofa with Harry Wordsworth, who had been an old acquaintance of her's before she descended quite so low as she had done previously to her sudden elevation to the Peerage.

"Well, my good fellow," said Harry, "how late you are! We have been waiting here for you, to give us some tea; and now we shall miss the Opera."

For one moment Ormsby felt bewildered at so singular a situation; but in another his resolution was taken, and addressing the fair Arabella, he said, "If your Ladyship would allow me one minute's private conversation with you, it may perhaps spare your feelings, as well as those of

this Lady," pointing to Matilda, who then entered the room.

"Oh, don't let me interfere with family secrets," said Harry Wordsworth, carelessly; "I'm for the Opera—*a rivederla*, Signora," said he to Matilda, and left the room.

But Ormsby still motioned his sister-in-law to follow him into the next apartment, and they left Matilda alone; who, though from not knowing who the Lady was, did not comprehend the whole extent of the dilemma; yet, upon reading Mrs. Laceby's open note, which Ormsby had left upon the table, perceived that there was some strange mistake, which could only end in mortification to her.

She was not left long in suspense; for the gentle Arabella soon rushed again into the room, evidently in a state of great indignation, screaming out—"Should be careful with whom she associates!—Indeed, she should have thought of that before she went off with you. I shouldn't do her so much harm as you have, I take it. I'd have you to recollect, that I am an honest woman, and have a situation in society. I should like to know who would suffer most by the old

saying of—'Birds of a feather flock together.' I was your brother's lawful wife; and if I had any children, they would have cut you out. But what will *your* brats be, if you have any?"

Lord Ormsby interrupted this tirade, by leading her gently, but firmly, to the door, and calling Lady Ormsby's carriage.

"Well," said she, as she left the room, "you shall repent this—you, and your lady who stands crying there. I won't bemean myself to call her what she is."

Bitterly did Matilda feel this, the first of those mortifications to which, even in a worldly point of view, her unhappy situation constantly exposed her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In vain did Ormsby endeavour to efface the humiliating impressions which were left on the sensitive mind of Matilda by the interview which has just been described.

"How can you allow yourself, my dearest Matilda" said he, "to be so much moved by the vulgar ebullitions of that odious creature? That one like her should be blind to the obvious distinction between a single, almost pardonable error, and habitual vice, is not to be wondered at; nor is it surprising, that she should endeavour to reduce you to her own degraded level. Her violent temper it was to be expected would explode, when reminded of that difference between you and her, which either her depraved feelings prevented her from perceiving herself, or her impudence induced her to expect would not be apparent to others."

"Strange instruments," answered Matilda, shaking her head, "are sometimes made use of

to open our unwilling eyes to our real situation, and to remove the veil with which passion for a time has obscured our powers of self-estimation. O, Ormsby," added she with emotion, "all that, that odious woman conveyed in her own disgusting language, is but too, too true."

"Why will you say this?" said Ormsby, half provoked: "when she presumed to draw a comparison between her own infamous self, (who was at one time as low and as base as the unhappy wretches who starve in the streets,) and a delicate and refined creature like you, who have only sought a refuge from intolerable oppression, under the protection of him to whom you had plighted your first faith, from whom you had been separated by unworthy artifice, and to whom you will soon be united by indissoluble ties."

"Would that day were come," said Matilda. "To all the painful publicity attendant on the divorce would I willingly submit, if by a patient endurance of shame I might purchase an escape from sin.—For though, dearest Augustus, whilst those bright eyes beaming with love are before me, I own my guilty pleasure is great; yet in the few moments of reflection your devoted

kindness leaves me, bitter is the remorse with which I feel, that it is a life of sin that we are leading. She said but too truly—that woman.—Her present situation is more respectable than mine."

"I cannot bear to hear you countenance such an absurdity," said Ormsby, a little pettishly. "How can you couple respect and her? You little know how shamefully she abused my poor brother's confidence; and I dare say, if it was worth inquiring about, that we should find her present course of life as infamous."

"May be so," replied Matilda; "if she abuses the advantages with which she has been unworthily invested, her reproach is the greater. But can you not, without being offended, make allowances for bitter regret on my part, at being obliged to own to myself that I am reduced to a situation in which her proffered acquaintance cannot be considered as an insult?"

"Offended with you I can never be," said Ormsby, at once softened. "If there was any irritation in my manner, it was only at your obstinately refusing to do justice to yourself. Look cheerful again, and you at once restore my serenity."

"Indeed, efforts to appear cheerful are never wanting on my part," Matilda replied; "for I cannot but be sensible of the great sacrifices you have made for me, and the claim which that gives you to every exertion of mine, to repay you with as much domestic comfort as a poor guilty creature, on whom the canker remorse is constantly preying, has it in her power to impart."

Ormsby knew not what to say. He took two or three hasty turns about the room, and then stood for a moment on the balcony, not knowing whether he should easiest soothe and comfort her by contending the point farther, or by admitting the justice of her self-reproaches.

At last, taking his hand kindly, whilst she struggled to repress her tears, she continued,—"Forgive me if I distress you;—but one thing that woman said which sunk deep into my heart. My shame will not end with my own wretched existence.—Oh, Augustus—I cannot bear to think that I live but to entail infamy on innocence,—that a few short months will produce a living stigma to perpetuate reproach. Let me then, whilst I can, revel with all a mother's fondness in those instinctive caresses which I may receive in the ignorance of infancy; for the first

dawn of intelligence must teach my child to blush for her who gave it birth."

This was a subject which could not but make much impression on Ormsby.—He was not without family pride; on the contrary, though it was never offensive or obtrusive, he possessed it in a degree almost amounting to a weakness. He had often paced up and down the long gallery at Ormsby Castle, and taken a strange pleasure in studying all the noble daubs with which it was lined, and in summing up all the illustrious links by which, without a single flaw, the ancient barony had been handed down through successive centuries. He had been unable to keep within any moderate bounds his indignation at his brother's disgraceful marriage. It was impossible, therefore, that any image more galling to his feelings could have been conjured up, than that of his and Matilda's first offspring stigmatized as illegitimate, and wandering an unacknowledged outcast from the mansion of his forefathers, whilst his own name and family would be extinct with him, and the ancient property of his house pass away to collateral strangers.—Oppressed with this idea, however anxious he was to mitigate Matilda's distress, he knew not how to begin,

or what consolation to offer, when he himself felt as poignantly the full force of her regrets. He therefore only bit his lips in silence, whilst he allowed her uninterruptedly to continue.

" More than any thing else in the world have I often envied your mother's feelings of maternal pride in you and Emily. Often have I wished that, in my declining years, I might have such a son and such a daughter, and have thought that if one alone was allowed me, I should not know which to choose—whether to experience the constant care and respectful attention of an attached girl, or to feast my ears from afar on the widely-spread praises of a beloved and admired boy.—But now it is but a choice of evils—whether a son shall suffer all the mortifications of forfeited rank, doubtful situation, and disputed name; or a daughter be exposed to other as bitter humiliations,—suspicion of character, and avoidance of connexion; and that either shall know that they owe all this, which renders their existence irksome, to the sin and shame of their parents."

" Oh, too much of this, dear Matilda," said Ormsby; " I cannot bear to think of it.—But it is yet possible that such a calamity may be averted. —I am in daily expectation of hearing from Lon-

don, that the proceedings preliminary to the divorce have been commenced. It is nothing but Sir James's sordid unwillingness to part with your fortune, which has so long delayed it. It is a subject of much too delicate a nature, for one to attempt to enter into any arrangement; otherwise how gladly would one facilitate the proceedings by removing his objection. 'Twas a strange will, that of your uncle."

"It was indeed," said Matilda, glad to avail herself of the relief of her excited feelings which a change of subject offered;—"and strange and mysterious seem to have been some of the occurrences of my early life.—I mentioned, I believe casually, an extraordinary interview with a stranger monk, which happened the day previous to that in which I was hurried away from Rome. His half-hinted communications with respect to my family, which, when interrupted, he promised to complete on the morrow, made a strong impression upon my mind at the time, though almost immediately superseded by the more agitating events which followed. I cannot say how much I now regret having, I fear for ever, lost a clue to some disclosures of importance with respect to my family; which, without being able

to assign any rational reason for it, I have nevertheless always unaccountably anticipated."

"Do you not think," said Ormsby, "that this very predisposed excitement of the imagination, which you acknowledge, laid you open to the artifices of some impostor, who, availing himself of a little superficial knowledge of your family, meant to work upon your credulity for his own ends?"

"I admit," replied Matilda, "that yours is the rational way of interpreting it, to which the common sense of any but an eye-witness would naturally lead. But there is an unimpeachable truth in manner, which must be seen to be believed; and this it was which carried conviction to my mind.—Had you heard him speak of my mother, you would have felt that there was no longer room to doubt that he had known and valued her, of whose presence her unworthy daughter was deprived before she knew her irreparable loss.—'If,' said he, 'you still are pure as her in whose arms I last beheld you.' Alas! I was so then.—I must not however think of that," continued she, checking herself. "He then seemed to hint at some communication which he had it in his power to make, which would require from me,

if not fortitude to bear, at least disinterestedness thankfully to receive."

"Most thankfully should we receive it," said Ormsby, "if, by discovering any flaw in the disposition of your fortune, it tended to remove the delays of which that alone is the cause, in the proceedings for the divorce. You have not yet quite removed my incredulity as to this strange adventure being any thing more than a stale trick on the part of some impostor; but at the same time I must acknowledge that my early recollections of my mother's remarks with some of her neighbours soon after the death of your father, would rather tend to confirm the suspicion that there was some mystery attending your birth.—It was never accurately known who your mother was, any more than that it was believed she was a foreigner, to whom your father had become attached during his residence abroad, when a warm climate had been recommended for the benefit of his health. Some surprise, I have also heard, was excited by your uncle's sudden and unexplained absence from England about that time; more particularly as it was ascertained that he had not attended his brother during his last illness. All this gave rise to much gossip in the country

at the time, coupled with many other circumstances which I have since forgotten, though I was then just of that age when children are allowed to hear every thing, from its being erroneously supposed they cannot understand it; and when they pick up any story, not only in its original shape in the drawing room, but also the second edition enlarged and embellished in the nursery.

This latter part of the conversation, with its reference to past times, had so far tended to tranquillize Matilda's mind, as to render her more fit to receive the visitors by whom it was now interrupted, who were no other than Harry Wordsworth and Colonel Canteen.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Colonel Canteen had but lately arrived at Naples, where he had, in the course of his first walk, accidently met with Mr. Wordsworth, with whom he had that sort of standing acquaintance, which in England had for years remained stationary at the silent exchange of nods in the streets, and newspapers in the clubs.—This, however, was quite enough to lead to constant companionship at Naples; and the Colonel having heard from Harry where Ormsby and Matilda were domiciliated, proposed a call there together. Colonel Canteen, as we have hinted, was a great gossip as well as *gourmand*—equally ingenious in the invention of scandal or of sauces, —and always anxious to have a finger in the pie, in *tracasserie* as well as *pâtisserie*. But he was withal, a very high-bred gentleman, rather punctilious perhaps, and somewhat of the *vieille cour*. His manner, therefore, towards Matilda upon this their first meeting since the elopement,

was scrupulously respectful, and to her sensitive mind, formed a pleasing contrast with the free and easy familiarity of Harry Wordsworth; which latter, after all, was natural to the individual, but which she could never persuade herself did not proceed from an impertinence, which he might think her present doubtful situation sanctioned. Colonel Canteen was very anxious that she should go to San Carlos, to hear a new opera of Rossini's, which was there divinely sung by a constellation of talent rarely united in any theatre.—This proposal was warmly seconded by Harry Wordsworth, who, fixing his large languishing eyes upon her, drawled out a protracted "Do—pray." In spite, however, of this additional inducement, she at first positively declined it, from a dislike to appearing in public.—But when her two visitors were supported by Ormsby, who plainly shewed that he should be hurt if she did not go, she could no longer resist, and gave an unwilling consent.

Fond as she was of music, it so happened that she had never seen an opera in any of the first-rate establishments of Italy, since she left Milan. There, it will be recollected, she was so occupied with the performance, on her first visit to *La*

Scala, that it was long before she observed the admiration which her appearance excited among those better accustomed than she was to the comparative darkness of an Italian Theatre. San Carlos was equally obscure; but from the moment she entered the house, she could not help fancying that from every box the finger of scorn was pointed at her, and every whisper with which the performance was occasionally interrupted, she fancied was telling her tale of shame.

"Surely those are my old friends, the Olinskis," said Ormsby; "Madame Olinski still looking as young as either of her daughters.—'*Les Graces de la Pologne*,' they are called; for they live, as well as dress, like three sisters. I must just go and see them."

Matilda followed him with an anxious eye out of the box. Jealous she could not be;—yet she did not like to find him so very happy to recognise any women; nor was she much pleased that Colonel Canteen and Mr. Wordsworth should hear him, before her, express himself so warmly in praise of what, by his own account, seemed not exactly a reputable family.—What he had said was probably spoken lightly, but it dwelt heavily on her heart.

Such was the unfortunate situation of her box, that this was fated to be a night of mortifications; for Ormsby had hardly disappeared, and she was still occupied with her own disagreeable reflections upon it;—Colonel Canteen was telling her a long story, to which she was attempting to appear to listen;—Harry Wordsworth, who was sitting opposite to her, was making his opera glass perambulate the house; when from the next box, immediately behind Harry's chair, a preposterous pink hat, overloaded with an infinity of feathers, was poked round, and Matilda plainly perceived the fine dark eyes of Arabella Lady Ormsby, staring full upon her; and in a moment afterwards, a well-rounded arm, all bedizened with bracelets by the dozen, tapped the unconscious Mr. Wordsworth's averted shoulder, and its owner addressed him with "Ah, Harry—you seem in the *wrong box* there with my would-be sister, but as yet not sister *in law*, any more than in love."

Then beckoning him closer to her, and speaking in a pretended whisper, but loud enough for Matilda to hear, (and affectedly, as if to conceal her meaning, addressing him in Italian—of a superficial smattering of which she was more

vain than it deserved) she added—"*Che sia il tuo dovere di far geloso quello mio maladetto fratello.*"

"*Tace! tace!*" said Harry, whose hitherto matchless assurance sunk abashed before the superior impudence of his female friend:—So true it is, that no masculine brass is at all a match for a well-bronzed woman.

Here was a striking instance of this; for to avoid still plainer hints as to what his conduct should be, Harry Wordsworth was obliged to leave the box. The front place which he had left was immediately occupied by the colonel, who, not finding that Matilda reciprocated conversation very readily, was glad to place himself where he could command a view of the house; and peeping into the next box on the opposite side to that from which the gay widow had shewn herself, he suddenly exclaimed, "Why, I'm sure that's the admiral. How d'ye do, Admiral? When did you arrive? How d'ye do, Mrs. Laceby?"

These inquiries were answered by a precise-sounding female voice, which asked, in return,—"Are you alone, there, Colonel?" and a long, thin neck, which seemed unused to bending, was,

with some difficulty, made to insert itself into the box, and to display a most severely angular set of features, appropriately crowned with a rigidly mathematical sort of toque. It was but the apparition of an instant; for when Mrs. Laceby's little prim grey eyes met those of Matilda, who was studiously sitting, rather concealed, this severe censor withdrew with horror, and the curtain was, at the same time, offensively pulled more closely round her, as if to preserve her from the dangers of contact to which such a neighbourhood had exposed her.

"I must just go and speak to the Admiral," said Colonel Canteen; "I have not seen him for such a time. Excuse me for one moment, Lady Matilda," he added, and left the box.

When our heroine was thus left alone, in vain she endeavoured to keep her eyes fixed on the stage, and to confine her attention to the music. She could not help, occasionally, stealing a peep into the Olinskis' box opposite, where Ormsby seemed to have been most cordially received by both mother and daughters, and where she could see that he was endeavouring to make himself particularly agreeable. Nor could she prevent, occasionally, overhearing scraps of the conversa-

tion which was passing on each side of her. On the one, there seemed nothing that concerned her in particular, as the widow was only flirting pretty freely with some young Italians, who appeared to be in her train; but in the intervals, when the conversation on that side was rather soft than loud, she could distinctly hear the shrill, harsh voice of Mrs. Laceby, elevated as if in indignation, and pronouncing her name with a contemptuous intonation, whilst she repeated her opinion of—"hardened creature"—"appears in public"—"no sense of shame;"—a sentence against which Colonel Canteen seemed, in vain, endeavouring to protest.

Mrs. Laceby was one of those who literally feasted upon the feelings of her neighbours. With her the discovery of vice in another was equivalent to the practice of virtue by herself. Proud of her own unimpeachable correctness of conduct, whilst she anathematized the weaknesses of others, she considered herself quite at liberty, by neglecting the amiable in manner, to render virtue odious, and her home disagreeable; and as long as she relentlessly denounced those whom passion had induced to desert their domestic duties, she considered herself quite justified in

giving her own husband daily cause to wish, in vain, that she would follow their example, and leave him in peace.

From all that Matilda that night both heard and saw, she felt but too sensibly the difference there was in her's and Ormsby's situation. True, they were at present, in every respect united; and she had never, for a moment, had the least reason to doubt his affection; on the contrary, his devotion had seemed only to increase with the continuance of the connexion. But should any thing happen to dissolve that connexion, how different upon the one and the other would be the consequences of separation! From his reception that night by the Olinskis', she persuaded herself that he would not only be restored to his former place in society, but that he would be perhaps more than ever *recherché* from his temporary seclusion. But what, on the other hand, would become of her? From what had that night passed on each side of her, she perceived, that if deprived of his protection, she should be exposed to every species of contumely; —that the two extremes of her own sex, differing in every thing else, could unite, at least, in annoyance to her;—and, that from men, she

would only have to choose between contemptuous neglect and still more insulting attentions.

The pain which these reflections gave her, did not make the time appear to pass more quickly, whilst in her solitary box she was impatiently awaiting Ormsby's return. She felt additionally hurt, too, that he should be so slow in perceiving that she was alone. He was no longer in the front place in the Olinskis' box, which he had at first occupied, and she had therefore concluded that he was on his return to her; and had been every moment expecting the door to be opened by him, when she observed that Madame Olinski was still talking with considerable animation to some one in the back of the box; and this person's head being for a moment advanced, she perceived it to be Ormsby, who was still there. This discovery was almost too much for her harrassed spirits; particularly as the curtain dropped before Ormsby returned, saying, "What a short ballet! I had no idea it was so near over, or I would have returned sooner."

"Short, did you think it?" she replied; "to me it appeared to last for ever." "Have you been long alone?" added Ormsby. "I saw the

Colonel still with you when I made a move to return to you some time back; but Madame Olinski insisted upon my not leaving them so soon, and they are so entertaining."

Matilda did not feel equal to making any comment upon their encomium at the time it was made, as they were at that moment descending the crowded staircase; but after they were in the carriage on their return home, Ormsby again resumed, "Indeed, I don't any where know such pleasant people as the Olinskis."

"Dear Ormsby," Matilda replied, in a voice of stifled emotion, "Are you sure that it is not the contrast to the life you have been lately leading, which makes you think so? Any one would appear pleasant after your poor Matilda, who can no longer boast that easy flow of spirits which is derived from a mind at ease, nor has yet attained the hardened feelings which habit *may* perhaps some day or other give her." There was something in the plaintive but uncomplaining tone of this gentle appeal, which sensibly touched Ormsby. High spirits, a natural turn for society, and the first renewal of a former agreeable, though not valuable acquaintance, had led him for a moment into something very like neglect of

Matilda; but not only was the ardour of his affection for her unabated, but he had at all times a most peculiar sensibility to self-reproach at having wounded the feelings of others. This made him suffer severely from the conviction that she had felt his conduct as neglect.

"Can you then suppose that all the frivolous amusement of all the Olinskis in the world, could compensate to me for causing one moment's uneasiness to my own Matilda?" Thus he fervently exclaimed, and thus he truly felt;—and the warning he then received, made him from that time more than ever scrupulous in his exclusive devotion to her.

CHAPTER XXX.

It may perhaps be objected to my heroine, that she seems at this time only to have been rendered acutely sensible of the degradation of her situation, when brought actually in contact with the contempt of the world ; and that at other times she appears to have enjoyed intervals of happiness. But let it be recollected, how long she had been a stranger to kindness or attention at home, and that now she was engrossed by the exclusive devotion of one whose whole business seemed to be to endeavour to conceal from her every reality but the consciousness of being beloved. But as each of these successive incidents served to rouse her better feelings, her sense of shame and remorse became more and more acute, and the intervening gleams more broken and disturbed.

In pursuance of his desire to alleviate the inevitable *desagrémens* of Matilda's situation, and prevent her attention from dwelling upon the

mortifications which might follow every attempt to mingle again in society, Ormsby proposed a party to Pæstum. To this Matilda willingly acceded, and Colonel Canteen and Mr. Wordsworth also begged to be allowed to accompany them. The drive from Naples to Pæstum was delightful, it being just the season when such an excursion is most enjoyable. The first September rains were just over, and the cloudless brilliancy of the sky was restored, with that renewed freshness which the long continuance of dry weather had previously destroyed.

The pre-arrangement of a party of pleasure is not in Italy, as it is in England, offering a certain premium for disappointment. In England, the long expected morning is sure to be ushered in by a falling glass and lowering clouds; and after a doubtful debate of "To be, or not to be?"—when the devoted victims at last desperately determine to persevere,—parasols are exchanged for umbrellas, the gay holiday garb is shrouded in the thickest cloaks, and with funereal faces they start in pursuit of painful pleasure; probably on a *water* party,—with as much of that element above as below them,—and adding the certainty of being drenched to the chance of being drowned.

But in Italy the rain descends at stated periods, does its duty, and then is no longer a matter of speculation or of dread.

Upon arriving at Pæstum, whilst Matilda stopped to take a hasty sketch, the three gentlemen strolled through the ruins; where their attention was attracted towards the remains of a very substantial luncheon, which shewed that there was also another party there, and which some empty porter bottles seemed to mark as English.

"One can track the haunts of one's countrymen, like the encampments of the Indian tribes, by the bones of the victims they have devoured," said Ormsby, pointing to some well-cleaned drumsticks and pinions.

"We are grown a dreadfully locomotive population," said Harry Wordsworth; "all our cits now desert the Thames for the Nile, shoot the cataracts instead of London Bridge, and instead of a chop at the Red House, pic nic among the pyramids. But this has been a most ravenous tribe, by the havoc they have made. Look at all these sacred shrouds, from which these mangled remains have been cruelly torn," added he, collecting, between the tips of the fingers of his French gloves, almost a file of

Galignani's Messengers, which had served as covering to the profusion of food that had been dispatched."

"Do you remember," said Ormsby, "Dr. Johnson's indignation at 'the feelings of that man, whose patriotism would not gain force on the plains of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona.' What would he think then of those who could pick chicken bones under the pillars of the Temples of Pæstum?

"Why," said Harry, "that in all probability they had that sort of philosophy which constitutes happiness; according to the Frenchman, who says, '*pour bien jouir de la vie, il faut avoir un mauvais cœur et un bon estomac.*'"

"This is all very fine," said Colonel Canteen, who had been a silent, but not an inattentive listener to a conversation in which eating formed so principal a feature; "but," added he, "one cannot consent to starve upon stones. These pillars would be rather hard of digestion, however well they may do to ruminate upon."

At this moment, distant tittering and giggling announced the approach of the party, whose previous proceedings had excited so much at-

tention, and, at the opposite angle of the building from that where the gentlemen had been standing, and nearer to the spot where Matilda was seated sketching, appeared a number of ladies and gentlemen, whose gay attire, merry tones, and confused chattering, seemed to shew that they were enjoying that excess of excitement, which English people only experience at a genuine junket. A disagreeable impression, too, was made upon Matilda, that amongst this confusion of tongues, there were some voices that she had heard before; and this was painfully confirmed, when she distinguished, elevated above the rest, the shrill tones of Mrs. Hobson.

"Well, you may say what you please, but this temple, or house, or pest-town, or whatever you call it, is only fit for the *lazarettos* to live in, with nothing but their *pillows* for walls."

"Pæstum, Ma'am," said Mrs. Simperton on her right; and "Lazaronis you mean, Ma'am," said Mrs. Woodhead on her left. "And the Lazaroni," added Tom, "have only walls for pillows, instead of pillows as you call them, for walls."

At these unwelcome sounds, Matilda drew her veil closer on the side from which they came,

and continued intent upon her sketch book. But at the same time Miss Jemima Hobson, who was a bit of a romp, and was still of that innocent age, when a happy ignorance both of the manners and the morals of the world is at least supposed, cried out "Oh! look! here's a lady drawing! I must just run and have a peep;" then, skipping close up to our heroine, she exclaimed, "Law, mamma! if it a'nt aunt Matilda!" At this dreaded recognition, Matilda's pencil dropped from her hand, whilst her head sunk closer to her book.

"What!" cried Mrs. Hobson; "come here, child."

"Come here, Jemima," said Mrs. Simperton.

"Come away, directly," re-echoed Mrs. Woodhead; and all the females of the family immediately skuttled away, followed by their attendant beaux.

"And is it come to this?" thought Matilda, as she trembled in every joint. "Must I hide my head abashed, in the presence of a woman whose gross vulgarity of mind, as well as of manners, I used to despise and ridicule? But it is as it should be. Self-respect, once forfeited, the rest follows of course. Oh, my God!" she

exclaimed, bursting into an agony of tears, "How am I fallen—how debased."

When the Hobson party passed Lord Ormsby and his friends, there was a little awkwardness of deportment as they hurried by. Mr. Simperton stopped an instant, and his natural servility towards any great man, struggling with his sense of propriety, he hesitatingly addressed Ormsby;—"I hope your *Ludship* will not attribute any thing in our conduct to intentional disrespect, or spontaneous slight; but your Ludship must be aware, that in persons of my cloth, some attention to appearance is required."

For a moment, Lord Ormsby eyed this observer of appearances from head to foot, as he stood opposite to him, nearly two thousand miles from his cure. It was hard to say, whether his 'cloth' was marked by his broad-brimmed white beaver, his sky blue neckcloth, or his light jean jacket, tight nankeen pantaloons, and buff boots.

"You are, no doubt, quite right, Sir, to act up to your own ideas of attention to appearances," said Lord Ormsby, and passed on towards Matilda, after telling his two friends that he would return to them: for he imagined that she might have been discomposed by the suddenness of the meeting

with the Hobsons, and he did not wish that they should witness her distress.

The Hobson party in the meantime prepared to depart. Old Hobson was not there, as he had insisted upon being left behind at Naples, though utterly helpless there by himself; because, in his business days at Manchester, he had always refused to be included in any junketing expedition. Squire Woodhead had driven his lovely bride in a new phaeton, which he had sported upon their marriage; and Tom, emulous of the charioteering fame of his friend, had undertaken to act as toolsman to Mr. and Mrs. Simperton, his mother, and youngest sister, in a hired *caratella*, drawn by two rather unmanageable half-broken Calabrian poneys.

Tom was a little out of humour at this precipitate departure; and his notions of decorum not being very distinct, he would willingly have compromised all the female propriety of the family (which had induced them to avoid Lady Matilda) for the chance of being noticed himself by any of the gentlemen of her party; a distinction he much desired, from what he considered such "tiptop first-rates."

"What an escape we have had," said Mrs.

Simperton. "What would they have said in the archdeaconry, if they had known that Jemima had been just going to speak to her?" I don't think that Mrs. Philpotts would have spoken to *me* if she had spoken to her—would she, Mr. S.?"

"Fudge!" muttered Tom, as, mounting the box to follow his friend, who was already under weigh, he vented the rest of his spleen in a cut at one of the Calabrians; who replied at once with a grunt, a squeak, a caper, and a kick.

"For Heaven's sake, take care, Tom," said Mrs. Simperton; "you would not surely frighten me in my situation." But Tom, whose iron nerves left him very little regard for the fanciful apprehensions of any one, however interesting the situation by which they were caused, persevered, without heeding this pathetic appeal, in an intemperate conflict with his refractory steeds; which soon gave the rest of the party cause to share in Mrs. Simperton's (no longer affected) alarm.

Matilda's spirits having been completely upset by this unexpected meeting with the Hobsons, and the pleasure of the party consequently destroyed, Ormsby became anxious to return, and

Harry Wordsworth and the Colonel having succeeded in getting the carriage ready nearly as soon as the other party had effected their departure, they followed on the same route. After they had proceeded a little distance from Pæstum, Harry Wordsworth remarked, that the tracks of the carriage before them, instead of keeping straight in the middle of the road, had gone wavering and serpentining backwards and forwards like a fanciful scroll on a paper border. Hardly had he made the observation, when the postilions gave a yell of delight at something that seemed to amuse them just as they came to a place where the road was narrow, and the ditch was wide, —and, deposited in the latter, they descried the whole Hobson family. Their postilions, who enjoyed the joke uncommonly, passed them at full gallop, when Matilda exclaimed, "Oh, stop! stop, for Heaven's sake! they may be hurt—may be killed."

To persuade their drivers to stop was not the work of a moment; but when it was effected, Matilda begged Colonel Canteen to return and see if any of the other party were hurt, and if so, to offer them the use of her carriage to convey them to the nearest house. The Colonel gladly under-

took the commission, and upon arriving there addressed Mr. Simperton, who, though much discomposed, seemed to have been uppermost in the scramble: "The lady I am with begged I would express her regret at the accident, and her hope, that should any be much injured by it, they would accept the loan of her carriage to convey them where they would have assistance. You will perfectly understand, that the delicacy of her situation prevents her appearing herself, to offer any personal assistance, which she would otherwise have been most happy to do." "What!" said Mrs. Hobson, as she rose with dignity from the ditch,—"What, indeed! no, tell her that *I* am not ashamed so shew *my* face—*I* don't want to be *white-washed*—*my* hands are *clean*." The Colonel could hardly help smiling at observing how far her present appearance practically confirmed these assertions; which will be best imagined by recollecting that the ditch was deep, and the rains had been recent and abundant. The well-bred messenger was, however, disgusted at the rude manner in which his well-meant embassy had been received; and finding that none of the party seemed seriously the worse, he retired, and communicated to

Matilda only so much of the substance of the answer, as a man of the world could reduce into civil terms. And this was the last Matilda ever saw of the Hobson Family.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was not many days after the expedition to Pæstum, that Matilda had one evening sought, in the neighbourhood of the Camaldole Convent, a spot where, unsoothed by the consolations of Ormsby, she might for a time abandon herself uninterruptedly to her own bitter reflections;—a melancholy indulgence, in which she had latterly often taken a strange pleasure. As she leant over a low wall, from which is seen one of the finest and most varied prospects in the world, all nature's brilliant loveliness was wasted on her, whose eyes, intently fixed on vacancy, conveyed no other impression but that all was dark and dreary within.

She at length turned to depart,—when the first outward object that succeeded in attracting her attention was the figure of the monk of Saint Peter's, who stood before her.—He seemed in no haste to break that protracted silence which followed this recognition. At last he began:

"Something of this I had heard, and much I feared. Hadst thou been thus when last I saw thee, thou mightest have passed unheeded by.—Happy even then thou didst not seem, or thou hadst not looked so like thy suffering, saint-like mother. But she never looked as thou lookest now."

"Oh no, I trust in Heaven she never had the cause!" Matilda said.

"She never had," the monk replied; "for I know too well from whence such desolation of appearance, such utter wretchedness must come. Those who have reaped the bitter harvest of remorse, know too well the disfiguring furrows that it leaves. But fallen as I see thou art, how can I hope that the tale I have to tell, which requires high-minded self-sacrifice to bear, will not be rejected by thy unworthy ears?"

"Nay," replied Matilda—"though I am little prone to palliate my offences, yet do not think that any worldly sacrifice would be difficult to me. Did you but know my unhappy story"——

"Hold," interrupted the monk, "I ask not thy confidence: my duty is to force my own on thee. Why should I listen to the sad recital of your guilt?—I am too old to indulge idle curi-

osity—too forlorn to offer comfort—too abject to give advice. But to be brief, and to the point: I come to tell thee that Delaval and its ample domains are not thine by right."

"Most welcome news!" cried Matilda, whose thoughts immediately turned towards the effect which this discovery might have in facilitating the divorce.

"I am glad to hear that exclamation," continued the monk; "for then I need only hint the outlines of my tale, and give at once the ample proofs of its truth into the hands of one by whom it appears that they will be thankfully received. Of myself it is not necessary to say much, except that my name is Mortimer,—that I am descended from one of the younger branches of an ancient English Catholic family, whose reduced means obliged them to have me educated in a foreign university; from whence, merely from the absence of any other mode of providing for me, I was designed for the priesthood. It was impossible that any destination more at variance with my natural disposition could have been devised. But my religion excluding me from any of the active and honourable professions in my own country, my patriotic feelings preventing me from

serving against her, and my family pride making me despise the drudgery of a counting-house, there seemed no alternative; and having taken the necessary vows, I became, in due time, but whilst still very young, an inmate in the house of your grandfather, in the character of family priest and confessor. It is no vanity now to say that I soon grew to be a great favourite with all the family; but it is some shame to add, that in the situation I then filled I found the dissipated character of the last Lord Wakefield most congenial to my own. I was his constant companion, and in the course of a career of profligacy I contracted large pecuniary obligations to him. Even in his early days of apparently heedless dissipation I had reason to know that he cherished deeper designs, and that ambition even then had charms for him. The ill health of your amiable and excellent father seemed to hold out prospects of his being able to indulge these extended views; and whilst I was the chosen companion of that father in his last tour abroad, I blush to say that I was a secret spy upon his actions, devoted to the interests of the younger brother.

"When Lord Wakefield, who mixed little in the world, became enamoured of the beautiful

daughter of a noble Milanese, all my artifices were exerted in vain to prevent that union; which was stolen and secret, from the insuperable objections entertained by her family against him as an Englishman; though in this instance those objections were not strengthened by any difference of religion. This marriage seemed a death-blow to the hopes of my patron; who wrote, accusing me strongly of neglect of his interest, and threatening me with that ruin which the extent of my pecuniary obligations to him made it at any time in his power to effect. But during the pregnancy of your mother, Lord Wakefield, whose health had appeared perfectly re-established, suddenly sickened of a fever. Almost from the first, his life was despaired of; and then it was that he made that disposition of his property which left every thing that was in his own power absolutely to his posthumous offspring, male and female: much however, in case of the child proving a girl, necessarily accompanied the title. The guardianship was left to the mother if she survived, and in case of her death, to the uncle.

"This uncle, upon hearing of his brother's death, hastened to the neighbourhood, where he remained concealed, but in constant communica-

tion with me; whilst the unhappy widow, an exile from her own home, awaited the event of her confinement.

"When in due time the unfortunate Rosalia was delivered of twins, I was the wretched instrument used by Lord Wakefield to conceal the fact that the boy was born alive; and I presented you alone to your mother's longing arms. It was not long that she enjoyed even this consolation; for not many months afterwards she sunk broken-hearted into an untimely grave, and you were committed to the exclusive care of your uncle.

"From this moment Lord Wakefield's conduct towards me changed. He hated me, I believe, for the services I had rendered him; and when, after lingering abroad two or three years, he returned to England, he would not hear of my accompanying him, but made me an allowance conditional upon my remaining in Italy, and superintending the concealment of the rightful heir, who was consigned to the care of a peasant.

"Upon the breaking out of the war, this allowance became irregular; and when at length it completely stopped, nothing but the dread of the infamy which would attend my share in the business prevented my starting for England, in order

to upbraid Lord Wakefield and disclose the whole.

"But though this I dared not do, I could not bear to see the noble child, who was born to a far different fate, degraded by menial toil. And that discovery which I had not the courage to make complete, I communicated in part to his maternal grandfather, Count Santelmo,—by whom he was gladly acknowledged."

"By whom did you say?" cried Matilda, with breathless eagerness.

"By Count Santelmo," repeated the monk.

"Merciful powers! he is then my brother!" she exclaimed; "and there is one in the world whom I can love without sin."

"Thou knowest him, then?" cried the monk. "Then, let me conjure thee, hasten to do justice and make restitution, in order that those empty repinings, and that barren repentance, which for years have embittered my cloistered privacy, may at length take the substantial form of real atonement. Then may I hope to close my eyes in peace; and, by disinterestedly offering to resign that which, backed by the proofs I have to give, the law might in time force from

thee, *thy* errors may be obliterated too, and thy faults forgiven."

"I trust," said Matilda, "that under no circumstances should I desire to retain by artifice, that which was not mine by right. But in this instance I will not pretend to take the merit of a sacrifice. Situated as I am, it will be more than a relief to be rid of the burthen of my inheritance; and that which to a stranger I would gladly resign, I shall even rejoice in transferring to one, whose happiness, if I am not mistaken, it will contribute to ensure."

"Something," replied the monk, "I had imperfectly learnt of the difficulties of his latter life; and this had made me more than ever anxious to unburthen myself of those painful disclosures; for whilst I heard that he continued in the tranquil enjoyment of his maternal inheritance, I was the less eager to cause the confusion which must arise from reversing the present settlement of the property. But I can never bear to think of his wandering about an unacknowledged exile, when it is in my power to restore to him country and fortune, of which I unjustly deprived him. Here, therefore, without hesitation,

I resign into your hands those proofs of the truth of my tale, which you will find in this pacquet of written communications, between me and your uncle, whose hand-writing you will recognise.—I give them to you, I repeat, in the most perfect confidence, from the little I have seen of you, that you will make that use of them which justice requires; as my monastic vows and habits of seclusion would render it inconvenient for me to take an active part in the business.—Should any further information be required, I shall be found here at the same hour to-morrow." Saying this he slowly departed, and Matilda hastened to communicate to Ormsby the strange disclosures of this eventful morning.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Upon hearing from Matilda these strange and unexpected discoveries, Ormsby became most eager to lose no time in probing them to the bottom, and obtaining, if possible, further proofs from the monk, in confirmation of the story he told. In pursuance of this object, he himself kept the appointment which Mortimer had made for the morrow, on the same spot, and at the same hour, and he then succeeded in obtaining a sight of some other documents in the handwriting of the last Lord Wakefield, which, for his own satisfaction, the monk still retained in his possession. He also learnt the name and residence of the "Fattore," in the neighbourhood of Genoa, on whose farm the young Santelmo had, in concealment, passed the first years of his infancy, till restored to his grandfather's family; also the direction of the priest who solemnized the private marriage between his parents, and who was now the principal of a

monastery on the Piedmontese side of the Alps. There were also the names of several distinguished families whom Mortimer had formerly known, as resident upon the borders of Piedmont and the Milanese, in which neighbourhood the Santelmo property was situated, and who, if still living, must recollect many circumstances connected with the supposed marriage and subsequent death of the unfortunate Countess Rosalia. All these, and more than these confirmations, Ormsby's experience told him would be necessary, in order to convert the moral conviction he himself felt of the truth of the story told by Mortimer, into that legal proof which could alone be serviceable to Santelmo.

Our hero's abstract love of justice would have induced him to think lightly of any trouble or difficulties which might attend his endeavours to restore to an injured individual his birthright, when chance seemed to have confided to him the means requisite for attaining that object. But other motives were certainly not without their share, in causing him to make that sacrifice of his feelings and his inclinations, which he was afterwards induced to do, by his eagerness to

effect the reinstalment of Santelmo in the property of his fathers.

However Sir James Dornton might delay his proceedings for the divorce, from a sordid desire to make his profit from some speculations he had undertaken on the Delaval property, before he should be obliged to relinquish it, yet there seemed no doubt, from the publicity of the elopement, that the divorce would follow sooner or later. But that it should be sooner, and *not* later, was of the utmost importance to Ormsby; who could not bear the idea that it might be delayed till after the birth of that child whom Matilda must now, before many months elapsed, bring into the world. He looked forward with horror to the idea of perpetuating reproachful distinctions even in the bosom of his family, and seeing his first, perhaps his favourite child, illegitimatized, and supplanted by all those who might come after him—his younger brothers by blood, but superiors in rank

Distracted with this idea, which his kind nature and his family pride united to render painful, he knew that the establishment of another rightful claimant to the Delaval property would mainly

contribute to accelerate his object; and that for the timely acknowledgment of that claimant's right, it was necessary his own personal exertions should be used without delay, in accumulating the proofs of which he had received the clue.

Feeling all this, yet could he not resolve to make the effort to leave Matilda in her present situation. To prevail upon him to do so, all her influence was used, and in a manner which her disinterested nature led her to believe would be most effective.

"'Till now I could never have believed that any combination of circumstances could have reconciled me to your absence, much less induced me to urge it. But it is time to reject all selfish considerations. There are those to whom we have done much wrong, to whom we may now make a tardy reparation.

"Let none imagine, that, by the criminal indulgence of their passions, they injure themselves alone. Your excellent mother, and the innocent Emily,—to them we have brought shame and sorrow, instead of the comfort their kindness merited; but we still have it in our power to ensure their happiness. I have often regretted

to you the attachment between Emily and Santelmo, which his condition rendered hopeless. Let us then not lose a moment in removing the only objection that could exist to the union of two beings every way formed for each other."

"You cannot be more anxious than I am for such an event," returned Ormsby; "but here, at least, there is no cause for such breathless haste, as to force me from you even now. Sure of each other, what can prevent the timely accomplishment of their wishes?"

"Oh, Ormsby," answered Matilda, "WE, at least, cannot blind ourselves to the dangers of delay. Had worldly objections never interposed to part *us*, how different had been our present situation! And if Emily will not be exposed to those fatal artifices which were used to separate *us*, yet think how much more hopeless than your's could ever be, is Santelmo's condition;—a banished wanderer upon the face of the earth, with no ties of country or of family—his ardent nature burning with a sense of wrong, which it is too probable will, ere long, hurry him headlong into some desperate design. Should we, then, lose one moment in saving him from impending

ruin, and restoring him to that happy position in society which is his by right—where his love of liberty may find an ample, though peaceful field for the exertion of its energies, and his kindlier affections meet their just reward?"

Moved by arguments such as these, seconded as they were by his own anxiety to omit no possible means of accelerating the divorce, Ormsby admitted that he ought, at all hazards, to exert himself to procure the necessary proofs, in confirmation of the birth of Matilda's brother. And as it was evident to both, that she was not at present in a state to accompany him in a long and harrassing journey, their temporary separation was inevitable. She had, however, a particular dislike to being left alone at Naples,—the ceaseless bustle and exuberant gaiety of which, was most distasteful to her in her present state of mind. Nice occurred to them both as a tranquil retreat, in which she might await his return; and an opportunity of a conveyance thither, by sea, occurring at that time, they gladly availed themselves of it; and Matilda left matchless Naples, not only without regret, but with a sense of disgust at the recollection of many of the miseries

to which so uncongenial a residence had exposed her.

Striking was the contrast which the place of their destination furnished upon their first arrival. Instead of an ever-varying chaos of sounds, the effervescence of the reckless mirth of the most mercurial population in the world, all around them seemed now hushed into a preternatural stillness. The very climate was soft rather than brilliant,—as if partaking of the subdued tone most congenial to its sad office, of soothing the sufferings of invalids, and delaying where it cannot eventually prevent the progress of lingering—often hopeless disease.

In a small and secluded villa, within a short distance from the town, Matilda was established, previously to Ormsby's departure; which, knowing to be inevitable, they neither of them wished should be delayed. Ormsby had already written to his man of business, in England, enclosing copies of the late Lord Wakefield's letters, and explaining the extraordinary disclosures to which they referred; also mentioning the other confirmatory testimony which he was about to obtain. He was not without hopes, that these circum-

stances, when hinted in a circuitous manner to Sir James's advisers, might make them anxious for the sake of his character, that the proceedings for the divorce should have the precedence of these other discoveries, and should not appear contingent upon the loss of Lady Matilda's fortune.

It was settled that Ormsby should, in the first instance, embark in a felucca for Genoa, and from thence should proceed to the Santelmo property, and endeavour to collect the best evidence of the marriage of the mother, and birth of twins, which the clue, furnished him by Mortimer, might enable him to procure. He intended also, if possible, to see Santelmo himself, before his return to Nice.

If it would have been difficult to decide whose anguish was most acute at the moment of separation, there was little room for doubt with whom the exclusive influence of that feeling would be most lasting. In all separations, doubly hard is the lot of that one who is left behind; as change of scene does not more irresistibly tend on the one hand to weaken and obliterate at each repetition one constantly recurring regret, than, on the other hand, the identity and continuance

of all inanimate objects around serve to sustain and cherish the recollection of that which is gone, and from which alone they derived their charm.

But besides this, there were particular circumstances in Matilda's situation which rendered constantly increasing the uneasy restlessness caused by Ormsby's absence. In vain she attempted to distract her attention by the enjoyment of the beauties of nature, to which her mind had been always peculiarly alive, and which here abounded in every variety, even within the limits of her solitary rambles. Still the idea of Ormsby's absence absorbed her whole soul.—"He has then left me, and I am alone," triumphed over every attempt to stifle it with other thoughts:—"Far, far different is my situation from that of a virtuous wife, who, however with affectionate fondness she may regret the temporary absence of her husband, yet consoling herself with the consciousness of the performance of her own domestic duties, looks forward with certainty to his stated return. But what right have I to indulge any such prospective security? True, he left me with the protracted embrace of ardent affection, but with what confidence can I anticipate the undiminished warmth of his feel-

ings on his return? That he should desert me, I do not fear; his goodness of heart and his honour will alike prevent that; yet, have I not cause to dread that absence? May not reflection conspire to remove the delusions of passion, and may he not then see me such as I am,—a poor fallen guilty creature? In vain would his kindness attempt to conceal such a consequence of our ill-starred separation; quick as lightning could I detect the least diminution in his love, the consciousness of which would kill me; and if my fears are well founded, all I hope is, that I may be spared the last pang of knowing that they are so."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THERE is something peculiarly melancholy in the reflections excited by an English burial ground in a foreign land. The sight of so many whose career has been abruptly closed, even in the midst of a transitory tour of pleasure, furnishes the aptest illustration of the uncertainty of our worldly pilgrimage ; and the long list of those who, buoyed up by youth and hope, had vainly sought here a secure asylum from the attacks of a treacherous disease, shows the nullity of all human efforts to avoid the decrees of a Superior Power. Reason rejects the idea, that when the nobler part of man is relieved from " this flesh which walls about our life," the freed spirit should condescend to waste a thought on what part of the world dust to dust returns; yet is it a weakness inseparable from our frail natures in their present imperfect state, that some of the noblest and best have been known to feel, even in their last moments, the keenest anxiety as to the fate

of their remains; and the desire that we may repose with our fathers is so universal, that we cannot contemplate our countrymen's foreign cemetery without something of the compassion excited by a sentence of eternal exile.

Matilda's state of mind inducing her rather to court than avoid sorrowful impression, she had often wandered in the English burial ground; and feeling as lost to society as any of those who reposed around, had occupied herself in deciphering the sculptured expressions of the world's esteem, which she had already forfeited, and the praises for the performance of those duties which she had abandoned.

In one of these sad rambles, she somewhat abruptly met an English lady in deep mourning, who, as she passed, made a sort of doubtful attempt at recognition. At the moment, though Matilda had some recollection of her face, she could not recall her name. The lady was not young, nor regularly handsome, but with a pleasing, though sorrowful expression of countenance, and a complexion of unnatural fairness. After she had passed, Matilda suddenly recovered the remembrance of who she was, and where she had seen her. "It is the

Mrs. Sydney, whom I met the year before my marriage, and with whom I was then particularly pleased. In spite of her melancholy manners, which, my uncle said, were intolerable in society, she was always reckoned such a pattern of every virtue, that even then, I felt awed in her company; and must I now be exposed daily to her reproving gaze? I had but one comfort left—that here, at least, I was perfectly unknown, and unmolested in my solitude."

These, and other reflections of the same description, had, in the course of her next day's ramble, more than usually oppressed her; and her harrassed spirit was relieving itself in tears, when her arm was gently touched, and turning round, she perceived Mrs. Sydney, who in a soothing tone addressed her.

"We are here, Lady Matilda, the only living creatures who are known to each other. It were hard if we did not endeavour to mitigate our griefs by sharing them."

Matilda was at first so overcome with the unexpected and unwonted kindness of this salutation, that she could not at once enter into that explanation, which she considered due to one, whose notice of her she thought could only

arise from an ignorance of her present situation. At last she faltered out:—

"I was, even when last we met, unworthy the notice of one so good as you; but how infinitely more so I have since become, if you have not heard, your goodness cannot conceive."

"Whatever I may have heard—what I see is—that you are unhappy;—which is all that I will recollect:—for there can be no stronger bond of union than misery, to one who has led the life that I have done."

"Nay; but still," said Matilda, "you cannot know all. Let me entreat you to guess the worst, and spare me the pain of explaining my present condition; for it is impossible that one whose notions (forgive me whilst I say it) were considered only too strict and rigid for the present forms of society, should knowingly stoop to associate with an outcast like me. Even your spotless reputation might suffer from my contaminating touch."

"I have no such fear," returned Mrs. Sydney; "to successful vice—fashion never made me bow my head; nor shall the world and its inconsistent censure now induce me to avoid one to whom I may be of service;—a sinner, perhaps,

but I am sure not a hardened one," she added, pressing Matilda's hand, and looking kindly in her face, as she led her through a little gate into the garden which surrounded her villa.

" Am I then, at last, to find a friend, and such a friend?" said Matilda, much affected, as she returned the pressure of Mrs. Sydney's offered arm.

" Think not," continued Mrs. Sydney, " in the contempt I expressed for the justice of the opinion of the world, that, however, in the performance of a duty, I might consent to endure it, I should ever have the idle Quixotism wantonly to brave it. But I feel that I have stood its test in the most trying situation to which a woman can be exposed; and I believe, many-tongued scandal never accused me even of levity."

" Oh, no," replied Matilda, " I have always heard your correctness of conduct cited as unquestioned; and that too, by those with whom such praise was not entirely unmixed with an attempt at ridicule."

" Well, then," said Mrs. Sydney, " it is not now that I am to be deterred, by any over-anxiety about my own reputation, from en-

deavouring to soothe and serve one in whom I am sure the sense of right is not destroyed: it is not now that I can hesitate in making the attempt to awaken a timely repentance; when, having lost all that rendered life valuable, I have a consciousness, unmingled with regret, that I myself do but linger a moment longer on the verge of the grave."

Matilda started at these mournful words. "'Tis very true," quietly replied Mrs. Sydney; "I feel it here," she added, touching her breast; "and you may trace it here," pointing to her cheek, in the brilliant hue of which, the hectic flush could not upon inspection be mistaken for the bloom of health.

Matilda sighed; for she could not deny the indications of her new friend's danger.

"'Tis no less true, that I have no cause to regret it. The only connexion which death has not already dissolved, is that which unkindness has interrupted and broken."

"Were you then unhappy in your married life?" interrupted Matilda; "was your's a constrained union with one utterly unsuited to you?"

"On the contrary," said her friend, "as much misery may sometimes be produced by yielding to the illusions of passion, as by attending exclusively to worldly views.—Mine was a love match. Mr. Sydney had all that could captivate a young and inexperienced girl; but as a husband —he never was a kind one.—His temper was not proof against the constantly increasing difficulties of a straitened income, and his vanity could not withstand the artifices of one of the most designing of our sex. He left me for a wealthier and handsomer woman. Since then, cruel losses in my own family have made me an heiress; and I have placed at his disposal the principal part of that fortune I have acquired; but, I have ceased even to wish for his society. Fondly attached to my family, I for some time enjoyed the calm consolation of their reciprocal affection; but one by one, all that rendered life valuable, have been removed; and I have been left alone in the world.—Oh, Lady Matilda, of the manifold afflictions to which human nature is exposed, there are few greater than being born to see all those nearest and dearest to you fall successive victims to that cruel disease which, lurking in

our frames, frequently under the outward show of health and beauty, delights most to prey on those whose youth and yet unblighted hopes made existence precious. I was born of a consumptive family; from our excellent mother we inherited this fatal bane. We early lost her,—soon after my father (who was in the army,) was killed in the beginning of the French war. To my brother we were all accustomed to look with mingled love and admiration, as our natural protector.—He was a fine, ardent, high-spirited creature, with that sanguine temperament which is not an unusual concomitant of this disease. In the midst of the confident indulgence of prospective plans for us and for himself, he fell its first almost unconscious victim. Why should I pursue this subject farther? My last and favorite sister, the one nearest my own age, but two months since was standing where you do now, eagerly anticipating our return to England.—When I met you yesterday, I had been weeping over her grave."

Mrs. Sydney paused to recover herself, and having made a strong effort to do so, continued: "You will perhaps think that selfishness was the actuating motive which induced me to obtrude

myself upon you; for in my lonely and dying state, what are the world and its prejudices to me, in comparison with the acquisition of a friend? but if I hope to receive comfort, so do I also trust that it may be in my power likewise to impart some.—Forgive me, dear Lady Matilda, when I say, that gladly welcoming as I do in you the evident symptoms of regret for past errors, I trust I may be enabled to lead your thoughts to that source which has been *my* true, constant, and only consolation in all my miseries; and from whence comfort may be poured upon your sorrows, and blessings upon your repentance."

From this day Matilda and Mrs. Sydney became inseparable companions. Our heroine, so far from being distressed by the association with one who seemed to have so much reason for melancholy, gradually succeeded in attaining that calm composure which was the characteristic of her friend.—Her mind again became alive to the beauties of nature, and she was induced again to avail herself of her pencil and sketch-book, in those pauses in their rambles which her own situation and the weakness of her friend rendered alike necessary to both.

In the mean time her mind was relieved by hearing constantly from Ormsby of the successful progress of his inquiries relative to Santelmo; and also by learning that the proceedings for the divorce had been commenced, and were going on without any fear of further delay.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Ormsby's absence had been unexpectedly protracted, by the difficulty he had found in accumulating from so many different quarters, and in a foreign land, the conclusive proofs of Santelmo's birth, and in tracing his identity through the different situations of his early life. But at length Matilda received from him the glad tidings that his disinterested labours had been brought to a successful termination, and that the evidence he had obtained was such as could not be resisted in any court of justice. He added, that, as the speediest mode of returning to her, he should embark in a felucca at Genoa, and again should have the inexpressible delight of beholding her on the day immediately succeeding that in which she received the letter. In conclusion, he congratulated himself on the intelligence he had received from England, that Sir James Dornton's divorce bill had already passed one branch of the Legislature, and that, therefore, almost immediately upon his

return he should have it in his power to make her irrevocably his.

"I am aware," said her friend, Mrs. Sydney, upon this intelligence being communicated to her, "I am aware that, in the minds of many excellent persons, very considerable doubts are entertained as to the propriety of these marriages; but, in my humble opinion, it is contrary to the benevolent principles of our religion to place any one in a state of irreclaimable sin. Many I know of those who have been thus redeemed, have afterwards been irreproachable as wives and mothers; and, in your particular case, I trust that the salutary interval of solitary repentance may have so chastened your mind, as that you will be properly prepared solemnly to undertake these new duties." Matilda bowed her head in humble acquiescence.

The morning of the day on which Ormsby was expected was serene and brilliant; it was one of those extraordinary efforts of nature, which, in that delicious climate, defying the calculations of the calendar, charm one with a feeling of summer security even in the midst of winter. Matilda had persuaded her friend to accompany her to the farther extremity of the terrace which

faces the sea; and on the smooth and sunny horizon her eye had long been fixed, endeavouring to catch the first glimpse of the expected vessel. But there was not, on all this wide expanse of waters, even one white wave to be seen which for a moment she could mistake for a shining sail. Still it was early, and the kind efforts of Mrs. Sydney to calm her impatience were for some time not entirely without success. Yet hour passed after hour, and still he came not. At length the sun, which had played on the rippled surface before them, had now retired in its daily course to glitter on the still snowy summit of the Alps behind them; and the short hectic cough of Mrs. Sydney, which this chilly change aggravated, reminded Matilda of the danger of indulging in the selfish pleasure of longer detaining her there. She insisted, therefore, on her immediately leaving her, and returning home.

When deprived of her companion, Matilda's impatience, of course, increased. "With so fair a wind," she thought, "he might have been here before now." As she uttered these words, she started at a sudden gust which, rustling in the fallen leaves, carried them before her in a sort of whirlwind, to a considerable distance. In her

present state of nervous excitement, even so trifling an incident for a moment checked that bounding sense of happiness which she had previously in vain endeavoured to repress, though her reproving conscience told her, that the pleasure she anticipated was a forbidden and guilty one. But this transitory uneasiness again subsided with the momentary agitation of the passing breeze which caused it; and yet a little while she indulged the unbroken hope of the expected meeting.

Left alone to revel uninterruptedly in the enjoyment of her excited feelings, she now eagerly sought a remote promontory, from which she thought she might command a more distant prospect of the course he must come. But when at length she did reach that point, wide and wild enough was the scene that met her view, yet far different from that which she had fondly anticipated.

Those alone who have actually experienced the awful manner in which, without the least warning of impending danger, tremendous squalls suddenly burst upon the Mediterranean, can form any adequate idea of the almost miraculous change which now took place in the appearance of all

things around, and of the accumulating horrors which abruptly presented themselves to the anxious eyes of our heroine. Heavy rolling clouds were collecting on all sides—their darkness and gloom aggravated by the struggling rays of the setting sun, which were making a last effort to pierce through their increasing density.

As she reached the rock she had so anxiously sought, the extensive waste of waters were still discernible, yet not, as an hour since, just rippling their otherwise unbroken surface, but "curling their monstrous heads" to meet the lowering vapours from above. For a moment she stood rooted to the spot, unmoved even by the violence of the gale, which blew with peculiar force around the point. A cold chill ran through her veins. Even as suddenly as the outward appearance of all around had been sadly changed, the fond hopes she had so lately cherished yielded to an overwhelming sense of impending evil. The low hollow murmur of distant thunder lingered like the knoll of death upon her ear. She pressed her hands upon her breast, and rushed wildly down upon the beach. Utterly unconscious was she how long, with feelings of mental agony far

superior to any sense of personal suffering, she wandered in the neighbourhood of that dreary point.

It was only in the aggravation of her fears for him in whom self was utterly absorbed, that she felt the pelting rain which drenched her light garments; it was only as it impeded her clearer view of the boundless ocean, that she regarded the heavy spray which dashed unceasingly against her delicate frame. But it was no fleeting form assumed by the ever-varying spray,—it was no fancied creation of her troubled spirit, when, almost within reach of the shore, rising upon the darkness before her, a light sail met her eye. One moment she caught it, as waving wildly in the wind, it flapped heavily over the heads of those from whose controul it had broken. It was but a moment, and the last appalling scream of human misery struck upon her ear, as it swept sadly by—mingled with the howling of the tempest.

Those whose career had been thus abruptly closed, were not more unconscious of all that followed the harrowing sound of their expiring agonies, than was the poor sufferer who had been fated to witness them; for almost lifeless, drenched

with the rain, and her arms outstretched towards the sea, extended upon the beach, the unfortunate lady was found by her anxious friend,—who had till now in vain sought her from the beginning of the storm, which she knew was so calculated to excite her well-grounded fears for the safety of one on whom her whole happiness depended.

It was with the greatest difficulty that when assistance had been procured, Matilda could be prevailed upon to quit the spot on which she had been found. Her senses had suffered from the shock she had experienced; and they were only partially restored, to endure the pangs of a premature labour. Long and doubtful was the struggle; and it was late in the following day, when the almost unconscious mother strained to her broken heart a female child, whose untimely birth and delicate appearance did not promise a longer continuance of life, than could be hoped for its evidently dying mother.

CHAPTER XXXV.

On the morning on which, as Ormsby had announced to Matilda, he intended to embark at Genoa, he received a letter from his mother; with whom, during his inquiries concerning Santelmo, he had been in constant communication. She wrote to inform him that she had arrived with her daughter and Santelmo at Turin,—that she felt unequal to a longer journey at present, but that she was very anxious to see him. This had determined him to alter his plans, and to proceed at first to Turin, and thence by the Col de Tende to Nice; determining that no unnecessary delay should interpose to prevent his immediate return to Matilda, and hoping that by using extraordinary dispatch in travelling, and only allowing one day for the arrangement of every thing with his family at Turin, he might, from the greater certainty of land conveyance, still arrive at Nice as soon as he could have done in the manner he had intended.

Though in this he had been disappointed, and had been obliged to submit to a day's delay, yet his kindness of heart had in part reconciled him to it, by the happiness it had enabled him to confer on others.

He had succeeded in arranging every thing for the immediate marriage of Santelmo and Emily; and it had been settled that when that event should have removed the only obstacle to it, Lady Ormsby should follow him, to be present at the time of Lady Matilda's confinement. At Turin he had also received the account of the divorce bill having finally passed the Legislature; so that the pleasure he anticipated from again beholding Matilda was enhanced by all the agreeable intelligence with which he should have it in his power to cheer her.

After he had descended the last hill into the valley of the Var, he could not help looking out in expectation that she might have come thus far to meet him,—forgetting that he had led her to expect his arrival from quite a different quarter.

Before the carriage had reached the villa, his eager eye had sought her well-remembered windows.—"Good God! they are closed! What can it mean?" he cried, as, rushing to the door,

he there was met by Mrs. Sydney, with whom he was previously unacquainted, but whose face of anxiety seemed to confirm his worst fears. His heart sickened with vague apprehensions; and faltering out the name of Matilda, he attempted to pass at once to her room. Mrs. Sydney gently detained him;—saying, "Thank God, you are come; but welcome as it is, it must be broken gently, and by degrees to her; every thing depends upon your not appearing too suddenly."

"For heaven's sake," cried Ormsby, "torture me no longer. What has happened to my Matilda?" And overpowered by the sudden revulsion of feeling, he sank into a chair, and covering his face with his hands, sobbed like an infant.

"Let me entreat you to calm yourself," said Mrs. Sidney. "Lady Matilda is better now—rather better. If you are already so overcome, how will you ever bear to see her?"

"See her!" exclaimed Ormsby, starting up, "this moment will I see her! Fool that I was, to linger here and lose another instant of her loved presence! Nay, in pity tell me then the worst at once. What has happened?" added he, as Mrs. Sydney again laid her hand upon his arm

to draw him back. Many were the interruptions Mrs. Sydney experienced, and agonizing were the sufferings of Lord Ormsby, as the sad tale of the night before was gradually disclosed to him. Yet even in these moments of intense suffering, his generous mind was susceptible of a grateful feeling for the genuine kindness displayed by Mrs. Sydney. How does sorrow at once excite affection for those who share it with us!

"Generous, excellent friend that you have been," said Ormsby. "Leave me—return to my Matilda—tell her that her poor Ormsby lives, and is restored to her.—Oh that, indeed, the bottomless ocean had engulphed me—'twould have been merciful if—— but it cannot be—she is young and healthy—she will recover—say that you think she will."

Mrs. Sydney pressed his hand mournfully, and anxious to give a new direction to a mind that seemed almost maddened with the bewildering emotions of the morning, she pointed to the bed at the further end of the room, where the little infant lay sleeping.

"My poor child," he cried, "what a welcome have I given thee on thy first arrival in this world of sorrows! Heaven preserve thee from

that misery, which, much I fear, must be thy too sure inheritance!"

When Mrs. Sydney entered Lady Matilda's room, she found her supported by pillows in her bed—the windows opened wide—her beautiful hands clasped as in prayer—and the big tears chasing each other down her colourless cheek.

"Dearest friend," she said, "I have been very—very faint—but soon I shall meet my love again. I feel it here," pressing her breast,—"and most grateful to my heart is the sensation of death. Nay, look not so—for I shall see him—God is merciful—a broken and a contrite spirit will he not reject."

"Dearest Lady Matilda," interrupted her friend, "do not give way to these agitating anticipations of death. I know there is no cause for alarm. But Lord Ormsby you will see, and that soon."

"He's here—he's alive—he is not lost—I read it in your eyes.—Ormsby, my love—Oh my God, let me live to see him again!" cried Matilda, as, exhausted by the effort, she sunk fainting on the pillow.

It was in Ormsby's arms that she was restored to consciousness; it was from his trembling

hands that she received the restoratives her weakened frame required; and even the stern, relentless hand of death was for a moment stayed by the renewed energies that strongest of human passions inspired; and for a time nothing was felt save the all-engrossing happiness of their re-union.

"My child—*our* child—Ormsby, have you seen it?" said Matilda, as Mrs. Sydney placed the infant by its mother's side.

"Dearest child!" said Ormsby, kissing it,—"Oh my Matilda, what a treasure it will be to us! how will our happiness grow with its growth."

"*Our* happiness!—Oh Ormsby—give me air—I am very faint—but do not leave me."

"Leave you!—Oh that I had never left you for one moment!—how could any thing persuade me to tear myself one instant away from my only treasure?"

"Say not so—Do not now repine, my love—I trust that good has come out of this evil—Ormsby, I feel that I am more fit to die,—nay, start not.—Had I basked ever in the sunshine of thy presence, many sad and salutary reflections had been withered and lost. Then think of the dear

Emily—her well-merited happiness is cheaply purchased even by death."

"Is there no advice?" said Ormsby; "pray compose yourself—you wear your gentle frame—these emotions are too much for you." Ormsby said true.—She was now utterly exhausted; but it was not with the pleasurable emotions she had experienced only too late. If any thing could have prolonged her fleeting existence, it would have been the happiness she now enjoyed. But her spirit was fluttering on the verge of eternity, and a few hours must see it wing its inevitable flight.

"And is there then no perfect love in this world?" sighed Mrs. Sydney; "must these dear ones part, just when they might in innocence have together lived to repent their past transgressions? But thy will be done!—Oh that instead—a being so sad and lonely as myself had been fated to leave them behind me!"

There were moments during the remainder of the evening when Matilda's eye shone so brilliantly, and her voice sounded so sweetly, that Ormsby and Mrs. Sydney almost indulged a hope that she might be spared to them; but the medical man conceived it his duty at once to

check such vain and fruitless expectation. He solemnly assured them that she could hardly live through the night, and that he much feared the child too could not survive.

Matilda overheard, in part, this opinion; and pressing the unconscious infant to her breast, she exclaimed, "Oh! 'tis too much to hope, even from infinite mercy, that my sins may so far be pardoned that I may be rendered even as this innocent."

"Nay," said Mrs. Sydney, "remember with confidence, that the same Divine authority from which we learn, that of such is the kingdom of Heaven, tells us that there is even more joy over one sinner that repenteth."

Through all that wretched night, Matilda's life was only prolonged by the constant circulation of air through the apartment, and as the darkness and damp gradually dispersed, the shades of death seemed to gather and thicken around her devoted head. The refreshing fragrance of earliest morning played in vain about her livid lips, just struggling to emit the last mortal breath that would ever mingle with the rival sweetness of the air. The first rays of the rising sun shone unseen upon her glassy eye,

about to close for ever against the reviving light of day,—it closed—and the sufferer and her sufferings were no more.

When Ormsby awoke from the stupor of despair to the full sense of his utter desolation, he found that his helpless infant had also closed its ephemeral existence, and that he was thus utterly bereaved at once of every outward trace, of every living record of his late guilty connexion.

After a time, he sought some relief to his feelings in active service in the cause of the Greeks; but even in the most eventful moments of his after-life, that would sometimes obtrude itself, which was never absent from his solitary pillow,—the image of his poor Matilda, as, heart-broken and repentant, he had seen her on the evening preceding the fatal catastrophe which had left him alone in the world.

FINIS.

Printed by J. Brettell,
Rupert Street, Haymarket, London.

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